

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation / Thesis: HOLDING THE CENTER: HOW ONE
JEWISH DAY SCHOOL NEGOTIATES
DIFFERENCES IN A PLURALISTIC
COMMUNITY.

Allen Harold Selis, Doctor of Philosophy, 2010

Dissertation / Thesis Directed By: Professor Steven Selden, Department of
Education Policy Studies

This study centers on the experiences of students and religious study faculty in the high school division of “CDS,” a successful Kindergarten through Twelfth grade Jewish day school that defines itself as a “community” institution. The school affirms a high-profile commitment to including “the widest spectrum of Jewish practice and belief” in its recruiting materials. While the student body comprises individuals who are diverse in their affiliations and beliefs, the school employs a religious studies faculty that overwhelmingly draws from the most theologically conservative subset of the larger community. Almost none of these instructors share the same orientation with respect to religious practice, beliefs or general cultural frames of reference as the students they educate. Nonetheless, the school’s administrative leaders claim a high degree of success at creating an embracing community, where individual differences are honored and respected. The purpose of this study was to examine and critically evaluate this claim. By employing a range of classical ethnographic research strategies, including participant observation and individual interviews, this study

explores the following question: How does a culturally heterogeneous group of religious studies faculty and students negotiate the challenge of communal participation in the high school division of one Jewish day school?

While the results of field work were analyzed using a range of classical anthropological methods, this study makes special use of the communities of practice literature to create an interpretive schema for understanding the cultural life and experiences of this school community. Coding and analysis of field data suggest that a commitment to defer engagement around significant areas of ritual practice as well as the construction of a value system which reinforces the merits of coexistence create a loose framework for the notion of “community” at CDS. These findings expand an emerging literature on pluralism within Jewish institutions and suggest new interpretive tools for understanding the meaning of community within the growing field of pluralistic Jewish community day schools.

HOLDING THE CENTER: HOW ONE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL NEGOTIATES
DIFFERENCES IN A PLURALISTIC COMMUNITY.

By

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Preface

Hats Off to Pluralism

On the first day of faculty orientation at CDS (my pseudonym for the community day school that served as the focus of my study in this dissertation), millinery fashion statements reverberate within the large auditorium of this Jewish day school. Some women's heads are uncovered, while others sport fashionable hats. Some angle their hats back at a jaunty angle, while others pull them low to the ears, concealing each wisp of hair. Several women wear wigs of varying lengths and colors. There is a pattern. The bare-headed women are mostly wearing pants. The women in skirts almost all cover their heads. Later, I come to learn that there is a "pecking order" of sorts. The pants and bare heads are liberal in their religious orientation. The jaunty hats are ritually observant, but progressive. The tightly fitted chapeaus are more conservative. The women donning wigs belong to the most religiously and theologically rigorous subset of the community.

I also come to learn that there are many different reasons for choosing one style of dress or another, as some female faculty cover their heads out of modesty and piety, while others see the head covering a part of a uniform that they wear in school, out of deference to customs that are normative in parts of the Orthodox Jewish community. A similar hat-trick plays itself out among the male faculty and administrators, just with different colors and materials. The language of ideology and religious association is transparent to most in the room—but as a newcomer, it overwhelms me. I am very conscious of the degree to which the staff display their labels. I also note pockets of unmistakable homogeneity, especially among teachers of Judaic studies. Given the religious fashion statements of orientation day, I am intrigued by the headmaster's

opening address. It speaks of breadth, inclusive community and a commitment to the notion that “there is more than one way to be a good Jew.” I look towards a new acquaintance, a teacher in the High school, and ask “Is that really what happens here?” “No!” he replies, “not in the High School.”

The High School students show up later that week, in khaki pants and polo shirts—almost none of them wearing “the uniform” of the Orthodox Jewish community that all of their Jewish studies teachers sport. With that final dose of cognitive dissonance, I begin my year as a teacher—and as a researcher. This disparate collection of teachers, students and administrators calls itself an inclusive community. Is that really the case? What might make this mosaic of individuals into a community? How might such a “pluralistic” community work, if it does at all? As I began my field work, I soon found that in addition to conducting a study, I was also embarking upon a personal journey. While studying this community I became a genuine part of it and that experience both taught and changed me. This dissertation reflects the lessons that I learned.

Acknowledgements

This research is the result of many years of work as well as the influence and support of a broad host of teachers, colleagues and advisors. Different individuals or institutions contributed to this work in distinct ways. Some imparted wisdom, some critiqued my thinking and others allowed me the freedom to make important discoveries on my own. Many invested in this project by affirming the value of the question that I posed, while others quietly but persistently urged me to refine the fruits of my research into the form of this dissertation. Still another group provided the kind of support that is often overlooked but sometimes most important in the arduous journey of research and writing. This included the financial means to sustain my research, technical assistance in the writing and editing process and finally, the emotional support without which I could not have maintained my commitment to this work over the seven years that it took to move from an exciting proposal to a finished manuscript.

With full appreciation for the notion that *im eyn kemah eyn Torah* (without material sustenance, it is impossible to reach intellectual goals), I offer my deepest thanks to the Wexner Foundation for selecting me as a member of the Foundation's fifteenth cohort of Wexner Graduate Fellows. Leslie and Abigail Wexner's personal efforts to establish and sustain the Foundation have changed the landscape of the Jewish world by affording leaders and thinkers the opportunity to make exciting contributions to Jewish life and scholarship. My deepest thanks to the Wexner family for their commitment to the Foundation and for the broad community of leaders and thinkers that it has convened.

These individuals made decisive contributions to my professional growth and development, and deserve much credit for the success of this study.

Among the staff of the Wexner Foundation, I offer deepest thanks to Rabbi Elka Abrahamson for urging me to enter a program of doctoral studies as part of my professional transition away from the pulpit and towards the field of educational leadership. Throughout that transition, Dr. Robert Chazan urged me forward in my academic work and help build bridges with other scholars in my field. I'm indebted to Cindy Chazan and Larry Moses for the ongoing counsel and mentoring that they both offered even after I graduated from the ranks of active Fellows. The broader Foundation staff also offered tremendous assistance in ways both large and small. Special thanks to Karen Collum whose tremendous kindness matched her uncanny ability to cut through bureaucratic red tape.

Other institutions provided important support for this work. I am indebted to the Department of Education and Policy Studies at the University of Maryland for the fellowship which they provided during my first year of doctoral studies. The Targum Shelishi Foundation offered critical funding during an intense year of field work. Finally, the Network for Research in Jewish Education named me as one of the recipients of their 2006 Young Scholars Award. Each of these institutions provided critical support which allowed me to focus my attention on the demands of academic work. This study is partly theirs, and is offered with deepest appreciation for those who work to expand the horizons of knowledge and deepen our understanding of modern Jewish life and culture.

It is difficult to imagine how I might have reached this juncture without the considerable support and guidance of my teachers. Dr. Steven Selden, my advisor and

the chair of my dissertation committee, provided me with shrewd advice from our very first conversation about graduate studies at the University of Maryland. His ongoing support has been complete, and his ability to think through the larger implications of all aspects of this project have been instrumental in helping me reach this stage. Two committee members, Dr. Francine Hultgren and Dr. Barbara Finkelstein, were important intellectual influences throughout my doctoral training at the University of Maryland. Dr. Hultgren was one of the first faculty members to expose me to the range of intellectual discourse that comprised the field of curriculum studies. Everything that I learned from her, without exception, came into focus in the writing of this manuscript, a true sign of the quality of her teaching. Dr. Finkelstein opened up new vistas for me in the study of culture, and I was pleased to discover that the manuscript writing which followed my field work felt like one long, rich conversation with Dr. Finkelstein. As the outside reader on my doctoral defense committee, Dr. Bernard Cooperman brought tremendous insight especially to the historical section of this work. His pointed questions afforded me the ability to clarify assumptions and challenged me to press deeper in my research in ways that transformed and greatly improved the quality of my thinking. Dr. Linda Valli brought a superb sensitivity to issues of research methodology. Her guidance helped me to refine important areas of this work that would have been otherwise obscured by the brevity or opacity of my original writing. Finally, I continue to have deep appreciation for the contribution that Dr. Jacqueline Cossentino made to this work by introducing me to new ideas about the sociology of education that fundamentally shaped my approach to field work.

A number of other individuals outside of the University of Maryland provided me with invaluable assistance in the course of this work. Thanks deeply to Margaux Buck and Jacob Labendz for assistance in the formatting and preparation of this manuscript. I am also grateful to the lay and professional leadership of the Solomon Schechter Day School of Saint Louis. Despite the many demands placed upon me in my role as Head of School, the leadership of that institution consistently afforded me the time that I needed in order to bring this work to conclusion. Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude too vast to adequately express here to the students, families, staff and administrative leadership of CDS. The Headmaster of CDS was gracious, caring, supportive and genuinely excited by this project at every step of my conversation with her. She taught me a tremendous amount, and deserves to *shefnachas* (to take joy) over the contribution that her school has made to the long term welfare of the Jewish people.

With the conviction that those whom we mention last are indeed the most precious to us, I thank my family for their love and support. The research and writing of this work took up countless hours that otherwise belonged to my wife, Lisa Peckler, and children, David Raphael and Batyah Devorah. Throughout the process, they encouraged me to press forward, knowing that my research reflected a commitment to the creation of world in which people of good moral character could live and work together with individuals who hold different values and ascribe to different beliefs. In their love for me and appreciation for this vision, they graciously offered me the time to tell a story that truly reflects some of my deepest beliefs and convictions. Most of all, thanks to my mother, Judy Selis, for quietly but persistently asking, “how soon will you be done?” even as the work of this project stretched out over the years. I love you all, and am

mindful of the fact that not a single page of this work could have been written without you.

Saint Louis, Missouri

April 20, 2010 – 6 Iyyar, 5770

יום העצמאות למדינת ישראל

Israel Independence Day

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of my father, S. Richard Selis, *Shimon ben Zvi u'Batyah, z"l*. May the ideals of graciousness, cultural refinement and reverence for tradition that he cherished stand as a memorial to his life and serve as guidance for generations to come.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Focus of Study

Setting

The Jewish day school is a subset of the independent school movement that typically educates students with a curriculum of Hebrew language, Jewish culture or religious studies for 30% to 50% of the school day. It is important to note the extremely broad and variegated character of institutional mission which drives American Jewish day schools. Many institutions view themselves as primarily religious in character,¹ while others highlight Jewish culture or commitment to the state of Israel as a defining element of the school's mission. In fact, it is shockingly difficult to fix any universally accepted meaning whatsoever to the "Jewish" aspect of contemporary Jewish day schools. It is precisely this lack of consensus about what Judaism means and how it should be taught and transmitted that makes this study of cultural diversity within one school so important for the field.

Recent demographic studies have shown that, at the time of my field work, American Jews enrolled over 200,000 children in Jewish day schools nationally (Schick, 2005). This level of enrollment represented a historical peak in day school enrollment, and corresponded to a spike in the number of new Jewish day schools which opened around the country in the early 2000s.² Up until the mid-1900s, participation in Jewish day school education was reserved for the most religiously devout, ideologically committed or culturally unassimilated Jewish families in America (Schiff, 1966). Even

¹ Schick's (2000, 2005) demographic studies show that that schools driven by religiously framed mission statements dominate the field. Still, this does not reveal parental motivations for sending children to such schools, nor does his work touch on the character of student experiences within these schools.

² See Schick (2005) for a review of statistical and demographic trends. By contrast, Archer (1998) and Beinart (1999) offer a broad and nuanced picture of the factors motivating individual families to enroll their children in Jewish day schools.

among nominally Orthodox³ first generation Americans, the only parents who sent their children to Jewish day schools were a small minority that deliberately sought to opt out of mainstream American culture. Most Jewish families of all stripes and convictions flocked to large metropolitan public schools during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. For new immigrant families in particular, these schools helped play an important role in the acculturation of children and adults into American society.⁴

In the last several decades, dramatic sociological change has overtaken the day school movement. The day school has become the one and only choice for Orthodox families to educate their children, prompting a dramatic expansion in the number, size and the range of ideological positions represented by Orthodox day schools. At the same time, growing numbers of culturally identified or religiously liberal Jewish families have enrolled children in Jewish day schools (Wertheimer, 1999).⁵ The resurgence of interest in the Jewish day school represents an attempt by many parents to reclaim a durable but still indeterminate sense of religious, cultural or ethnic identity. As such, schools are

³ One important issue that future research will have to address is the inadequacy of the current markers which designate Jewish identity constructs. The term “Orthodoxy” offers an example. Originally the term grew out of early Christian theological polemics, but was appropriated by late eighteenth century West-European Jews who clashed over the degree to which secular culture might impact Jewish intellectual and spiritual life (Meyer, 1988). In its original incarnation, Orthodoxy was primarily a theological term, one which denoted an adherent’s unflagging acceptance of the historicity of the Sinai revelation and acceptance of Jewish rabbinic legislation as Divinely generated. At the present time, a complex set of sociological, behavioral and even sartorial markers have become linked to theological claims of Orthodox identity. This rendering of the term “Orthodox” is so dissipated and complex that it retains little value as a bona fide label of any one, coherent Jewish identity. My informants from within the Orthodox community invested a conspicuous amount of time and energy classifying and qualifying the labels that they thought were most descriptive of them, with some insisting that they were “Modern” Orthodox, others claiming to be “Black Hat” or “Ultra” Orthodox and so on. Similar difficulties exist with respect to all other identifying language that characterizes or segments the American Jewish community.

⁴ Brumberg’s (1986) history of late nineteenth century Jewish immigrants argues that most parents pursued a tactical policy of cultural assimilation to allow their children to become successful Americans. Among the most striking images Brumberg presents are photos of Jewish children in New York’s Lower East Side dancing around a Christmas tree as part of their public school lesson.

⁵ Among the demographic that is increasingly drawn to Jewish day schools, it is important to note the growing phenomenon of American Jews who define themselves in a fashion that excludes fixed notions of religious identity (Hyman, 2008; Pomson and Schnoor, 2008).

valued for their ability to foster and strengthen the Jewish identity of children who live as a minority in America.⁶ As the number of schools expands, a range of different configurations has emerged. In addition to schools that tout the ideological line of various movements within American Judaism, a growing number of schools present themselves as “community day schools.” These schools attempt to meet the needs of multiple constituencies by offering an educational setting where varying approaches to Jewish identity and ritual practice are welcomed. As a key feature of its educational mission, the community day school welcomes an extremely broad range of social, cultural and religious motivations for participating in a learning community. For example, families might choose to attend a Jewish community day school out of an activist concern for social justice, fidelity to the ethnic bonds of Jewish peoplehood, identification with the State of Israel, love of Hebrew as a secular Jewish language, a search for spiritual renewal, belief that the content of Jewish tradition is the revealed word of God or the simple search for an outstanding elementary school education. The force of these quite disparate motivations behind Jewish day school enrollment has precipitated a growing and vital school movement that, on its surface, seems to challenge a sense of coherence about what draws its members together. Advocates of the community day school movement suggest that this eclecticism is healthy and purposeful, and recent literature suggests that the continuing development of such schools has already begun to transform both the state of practice as well as research into Jewish education

⁶ See Hartman (1996, 1999), who argues forcefully for the role of education in fostering a sense of identity and belonging for Jewish children. Soloveitchik (1994) also suggests that even in the Orthodox community, the school or Yeshiva has taken on new prominence as an institution which seeks to deliberately mold the identities of its students as a means of sculpting the culture of Orthodoxy.

(Pekarsky, 2006; Pomson & Schnoor, 2008). The remainder of this study is directed towards issues raised by one such school.

While neither the history nor the range of theology within contemporary Judaism are the core concerns of this work, it will be impossible to fully and accurately set the stage for this study without briefly mapping the denominational landscape of modern Jewish life. Despite significant discussion in the academic community about the value of the various labels which mark sub-affiliations among Jews, (Cohen & Eisen, 2000) it remains clear that many individuals who participated in this study as informants referenced their denominational affiliation as an important fact about their identity.

While not the first group in modern Jewish history to specifically invoke a theological or ideological sub-identity, Orthodox Judaism is important to this study due to the specific nature of my research site, which I describe further, below. Orthodoxy is notable as a theological term, connoting proper beliefs. Broadly speaking, Orthodox Jews believe in the existence of a personal God who in some way controls the events of the world and offered an explicit and detailed revelation at Mt. Sinai approximately 3,500 years ago. The content of this revelation includes the system of *halachah*,⁷ a complex set of behavioral dicta that include what food may or may not be eaten, what activities are permissible on the Jewish Sabbath and even the precise hours of the day that a Jewish individual is required to pray. While there are a surprising number of further sub-

⁷ In general, this dissertation relates Hebrew or Yiddish terms transliterated, in italicized English text, along with a translation and explanation. After the first usage, only transliterated terms in italics are used.

groupings within Orthodoxy itself, the two most relevant for this study are the “Black Hat” and “Modern Orthodox” groups.⁸

The Black Hat community is so named for this article of clothing, not necessarily worn daily but donned by men and boys over 13 years of age without fail on Shabbat, holidays and other formal occasions.⁹ While theology and ideology are critical in this world, Black Hat Jews are just as attentive to the outward sociological manifestations of their identity. There is a dress code-and people who flout it risk exclusion from the community (Levine, 2003). While many people in this community have professional careers, the sociological ideal is to study Torah in a formal Yeshivah setting long into adulthood. Indeed, the cultural heroes of this community are the individuals who demonstrate a level of knowledge that qualifies them for not only Rabbinic ordination by also an extended period of study that is supported by family or even the community. There are relatively circumscribed gender-denominated roles for men and women, and mixing with the opposite sex, depending upon the setting, is either frowned upon or forbidden. Birth control is not viewed as permitted under normal circumstances, and given stunningly fresh memories of losses suffered during the Holocaust, large families are the ideal. As a result of large family size and a preference for Torah study, economic attainment and disposable income is reduced compared to other kinds of households.

There is a prevalent desire within the Black Hat community to sanctify even mundane aspects of life, and a pattern of seeking out additional religious strictures in

⁸ For a brief tutorial on the contours of contemporary Orthodoxy, see Eliezer Segal’s piece “Varieties of Orthodox Judaism” at http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/363_Transp/08_Orthodoxy.html (accessed 2/23/2010) For more detailed background, see Lamm (1966), Shapiro (2004) and Blau (2005).

⁹ For a window into the life of this community see Heilman (1992) and Helmreich (1982) who focus on the American black hat community as well as work on the Israeli black hat community by Waxman (1998, 2004) and Stadler (2009).

addition to already normative aspects of Jewish practice (Soloveitchik, 2004). Given the inward religious focus of the community, it is not surprising that some number of Black Hat Jews express a sense of separatism or even distrust of the modern world. This is manifest most dramatically in an attitude that ranges from ambivalence to outright rejection of secular education, most notably the humanities (Berkovitz, 2002; Poll, 2006). A related phenomenon is a sense of ambivalence that many in this community express towards the State of Israel. While the Land of Israel is seen as holy, the secular state is often viewed as suspect given that it was founded by non-religious or even anti-religious Zionists in the late nineteenth century and maintains a secular character.

The other notable sub-set of Orthodoxy that is relevant to this study is Modern Orthodoxy (sometimes referenced as “open Orthodoxy”). This sub-denomination is much more open to of secular, non-Jewish culture, and strives to maintain intellectual contact with the world of the humanities. Gender roles are broader, and a part of the Modern Orthodox world has embraced feminist thought, all the while maintaining a stance that Jewish men and women have a fundamentally different (though less circumscribed) status within *halachah*. At the same time as it encourages aspects of growth or adaptation of tradition, Modern Orthodoxy offers a clear message that traditional religious authority structures which regulate the conduct of individuals in the Jewish community ought to remain intact.¹⁰ In addition to its religious ideology, Modern Orthodoxy has made support for the modern day state of Israel a cornerstone of its ideological platform. Finally, Modern Orthodox Jews have tended to seek higher secular education and vigorously compete for attractive positions in professional life. In most

¹⁰ The web page of Edah offers a helpful window into contemporary discussion in the Modern Orthodox community. See <http://www.edah.org>. For an application of Modern Orthodox thought to questions of curriculum and pedagogy, see Berkovitz (2002).

respects, the class-coded norms of Modern Orthodox life are indistinguishable from the social and economic standards taken for granted by suburban professionals (Jewish and otherwise) across North America.

Reform Judaism first emerged in Europe as West European Jews began to explore the philosophy of the German and Russian Christian universities from which Jews had been excluded until the late eighteenth century Enlightenment (Meyer, 1988). The most significant elements of Reform thinking include the belief that notions of a personal God is by no means a certainty, and that the Bible is not the literal word of God.¹¹ The system of Jewish ritual practices communicated by the *halachah* are seen as human creations, that are remain valid only within their historical time periods. In modernity, each generation of Jews is expected to adapt, to innovate and to craft a sense of Jewish practice that is distinctly contemporary, even if that approach to Jewish life must be updated in each generation. For example, the liturgy of the Reform movement has varied broadly over the last century and a half, during which it first abandoned Hebrew as the language of prayer, later returning to an eclectic mix of languages in updated versions of the Reform prayer book. Reform Jews are likely to have varying levels of commitment to Jewish ritual, and all reject the notions that individual behavior or identity is dictated or imposed by tradition. Just the opposite, there is a historical sense among Reform Jews that one ought to assimilate into the culture of their host country, a stance that Orthodox Jews view with varying levels of approbation. Most notable, in the last two decades, has

¹¹ The theological positions of the Reform movement have a tendency to shift over time, in keeping with the movement's penchant for continuing reassessment of its voice as a contemporary and progressive strand within Jewish life. For a view of this adaptation, see the various plenary documents of the Reform movement in Meyer (1988).

been the Reform Movement's intensely pro-active stances on a range of social issues including feminism, gay rights and racial equality.

Conservative Judaism emerged as a counter-reaction to changes initiated by the Reform movement. Theologically, Conservative Jews claim a middle ground, espousing a belief in both the existence of God as well as the notion that the religious authority of tradition must guide individual choices. While Conservative Judaism diverges from Reform in affirming the importance of *halachah*, it breaks from Orthodoxy by affirming the notion that many aspects of ritual life are contingent upon the historical setting in which Jews live and certainly can be changed. As a result, the movement is much more nuanced than the other two. By and large, prayer services take place in Hebrew, and Conservative synagogues enforce the dietary laws and Sabbath restrictions. At the same time, the Conservative movement has almost fully equalized the role of women within religious life and now offers ordination to gay and lesbian individuals through its American rabbinical seminaries. Recently this movement has faced important questions regarding its relevance, given that its centrist position is sometimes seen as neither sufficiently progressive nor adequately pious (Cohen, 2007; Farber & Waxman, 1999).

While each of these strands of Jewish life maintains its own unique ritual and theological position, there are considerable overlaps. Conservatives and Orthodox are similar with respect to their liturgy, while the socio-economic profile of Conservative, Modern Orthodox and Reform Jews are quite coherent with one another. The one place where the movements stand apart remains their general attitude towards the fixed or flexible character of Jewish ritual. This divide sometimes turns caustic; for example,

note the remarks of Norman Lamm, one of the preeminent leaders on the contemporary Orthodox landscape.

I used to think that ‘nothing’--that is, complete secularism and assimilation-- is better than Reform and Conservative affiliation. After all, they offered an easy way out of full observance, short-cuts that eviscerated the Halakha (Jewish law) by denying its authority, and allowed defectors from Orthodoxy to imagine that they simply changed labels but maintained full fealty to Judaism--all without any guilt feelings...¹²

Given the vitriol of Lamm’s remarks, one might question whether Conservative, Reform and Orthodox Jews could ever coexist in one institutional framework. If it ever happened, what would it look like?

The Case of “Community Day School”

Throughout this dissertation, I will refer to the institution in which I conducted my field research as the Community Day School, or CDS. While the institution is a real school, its name, along with all other proper names in this study, are entirely fictitious.

CDS is located in the suburbs of a mid-sized city with a long and stable history. Like many places, the city center includes areas of blight as well as renewal, but a variety of industries from manufacturing to financial services create a stable economic base for the suburbs. Just a dozen miles out of the city, the suburbs offer a range of neighborhoods in close proximity, with housing ranging from modest apartments and small houses surrounded by neat yards to expansive homes in gated communities. The atmosphere of the suburbs is quiet, lacking the driving pace and intensity of larger cities nearby. The pace of life in the suburbs echoes that sense of placid order. Many families have a connection of multiple generations to the area, and it is common for children to

¹² Rabbi Norman Lamm offered these remarks as head of the Orthodox Yeshiva University, speaking to a gathering of the centrist Orthodox Union. Accessed on April 19, 2005 from [http://www.yu.edu/lamm/O-U-2\(98\)-press.html](http://www.yu.edu/lamm/O-U-2(98)-press.html)

grow up and raise their own families just a few miles away from where they themselves lived as children. The suburbs are a place where successful families make their home, and despite the presence of excellent public schools, several private schools bearing Tony sounding names...and boasting high acceptance rates to Ivy League schools...have developed over the years. Without a doubt, this community cares for its children, and offers them the best of all things.

The Jewish presence in the city, and later the suburbs, began with the immigration of German Jews in the mid nineteenth century. These German Jews, at first shunned by their non-Jewish neighbors or hemmed into Jewish neighborhoods, quickly prospered and built temples to advance the Reform tradition that they knew from Europe. The Reform movement has a strong presence in this city, although it does not necessarily dominate the ethos of the community. The East European Jews who followed, arriving later in the nineteenth century, created other large and prominent synagogues, both Conservative and Orthodox. Beginning in the twentieth century, and rising dramatically in the years following World War II, an influx of Orthodox Jews from Germany, Hungary, Lithuania and other European communities slowly began to refashion the feel of this community. More neighborhoods became identified as “Jewish.” Several small synagogues were founded by the religiously devout, that in itself a departure from the prevailing trend towards building impressive monuments with seating for two thousand worshippers on the High Holy Days. A Jewish day school opened, and then a yeshivah for in depth religious study and ultimately the training of rabbis. Today, students from across the country come to study in that yeshivah, which is seen as an anchor of the Orthodox community and bedrock of the Black Hat way of life. For the last forty years, each

subset of the religious community from Reform to Orthodox has had one or more major institution which cares for its needs by inspiring its worshippers, comforting the bereaved, and educating its young.

Sha'arey Hesed (a name which translates as “the gates of faithfulness” in English) is the largest and most financially prosperous Orthodox congregation in the suburbs. Founded closer to the city center, it moved northwest to the suburbs as its members became more prosperous and sought more expansive surroundings. Their success shows in the elegant building the congregation created, one which sprawls across its thirty acre campus. The synagogue is perched atop a rise, making visitors feel as if they were visiting a college campus. Despite the two thousand family members the synagogue claims, Sha'arey Hesed has a feel of intimacy. Its clergy have a long tenure and the senior Rabbi is revered as both a pastor and a gifted speaker. He has an uncanny knack for noticing people and remembering their names. There is such a feel of intimacy with the synagogue that few people call it by its proper name. Instead, they often simply call it “Sha'arey.” The feeling of intimacy exerts a powerful pull on its members—in the year prior to the start of my field work, Sha'arey hosted a gala fundraiser that included a speaking engagement by a nationally prominent media figure and raised \$1.5M in one evening.

Sha'arey is notable not just for its success, but also for its unique orientation. Sha'arey is a Modern Orthodox congregation unlike most synagogues in the Orthodox world. While the Rabbi of Sha'arey was ordained at a seminary that is steeped in the ethos of Orthodoxy, he cuts a modern figure. Sporting no beard (and certainly no black hat!) he wears bold ties, drives a snazzy sports-car and is always quick to offer a hug to

members of his community. He works hard to make himself and the congregation accessible to all Jews, especially those who might not otherwise feel comfortable in an Orthodox congregation. As part of that commitment, he welcomes congregants from many different backgrounds and levels of observance. On Shabbat day, Sha'arey's parking lot is full of cars, and no one raises any objection despite the fact that riding in a car is one of the activities that is clearly forbidden by traditional standards of Sabbath observance. Other Orthodox rabbis in town, especially those from the Black Hat community, look askance at this practice. But where one rabbi sees a public violation of Shabbat, Sha'arey's rabbi sees one more way to invite Jews in and help them feel comfortable in an Orthodox synagogue. The Rabbi is passionate about this. Passionate about supporting the State of Israel. And Passionate about Jewish education. Out of that passion, he has devoted years of his career to building CDS.

CDS is a successful Pre-Kindergarten through Twelfth grade Jewish day school that defines itself as a "community" institution. With an annual budget of approximately \$11M, the school enrolls close to 1,000 students and employs over 140 instructors and nearly 40 administrators. CDS is a broad and complicated organization. It operates four age divisions on two different campuses, approximately twenty minutes apart. The main campus of CDS is located on Sha'arey's property, connected directly to the main structure of the synagogue. The newest addition to CDS is a High School division that opened in the early 1990s. Within a decade of opening, CDS was recognized as one of the area's most prestigious high schools, no small feat given the exclusive culture and blue-blooded pedigree of CDS's competitors. With small class sizes and several faculty members assigned to the role of college counseling, CDS succeeded in placing class after

class of graduating seniors in Ivy League and other Top Ten schools. As word of the school's success got out, applications followed, and CDS had grown to approximately 320 students in its high school division during the period of my field work.

The high school division of CDS is set in a modern wing of the Sha'arey campus, named after a prominent local businessman who donated funds to build the facility. The building itself features two dozen classrooms, a spacious library, computer lab, a gymnasium, a weight room and locker room adjacent to outdoor soccer fields. If the facilities are impressive, the faculty are even better. The school's headmaster is a savvy administrator, and spared no expense of time or effort to hire the best secular studies faculty that she could find. In some cases, the headmaster pinpointed outstanding teachers at other local schools, whom she aggressively recruited to CDS.¹³ This faculty, peppered with veteran teachers and the occasional Ph.D., easily explains why CDS was labeled a "power school" by one of the local suburban journals. The reputation is obviously well deserved.

From the standpoint of the school's curriculum, CDS offered an academic program that was impressive when compared to any high school in the United States. The high school curriculum included standard features such as a range of languages (Spanish and French) in addition to English literature and history. The math department included a challenging BC calculus class and for students who pushed beyond the limits of chemistry and advanced placement physics, the science department also included an

¹³ The headmaster's drive and ambition for her school were legendary, even among students. Over the years, the graduating seniors from the high school developed the tradition of producing a video that gently...or not so gently...parodied many aspects of life at CDS. In one section of the 2006 year video, the headmaster was portrayed with hunting gear, ropes and nets, laying in wait outside another high school's parking lot in order to snatch faculty members.

“introduction to engineering.” In addition to the formal offerings that the school’s \$11M budget supported, students took the opportunity to explore additional content areas that might not be found in any school. While working in the library, I came across students engaged in an independent study project on Russian history and culture. On another occasion, I found a student learning the fundamentals of conversational Modern Arabic. To be sure, students at CDS were highly motivated, and its program was built to challenge them academically.

At the same time, not every student at CDS was bound for AP calculus or added a third foreign language on top of Hebrew and Spanish. To begin with, CDS actively embraced the policy of tracking students, and placement in upper level sections of math or English was governed by standardized tests that students took during the year. Like any school, there certainly were differences of skill and ability levels, and CDS created a program which took these differences into account. The school prided itself on meeting the needs of a very broad range of students, including those with learning challenges. Towards that end, the high school provided a number of faculty advisors as well as a full time learning support coordinator with Ph.D. credentials to her name. The school made its commitment to serving students with different learning styles so central to its mission that CDS’s accrediting body described it as “outstanding” among peer schools in supporting this diverse range of student abilities. The commitment to caring for students on an individual basis even showed itself as part of the college advising program, for which the school (with a total enrollment of no more than 90 graduating seniors in any given year) employed three full time employees for the sole purpose of facilitating their graduates access to the colleges that best matched their skills and interests.

Some of the same dynamics governed the Judaic studies program that was also a core feature of CDS's program. The regular set of classes that comprised Judaic studies included Modern Hebrew, Bible and Rabbinic literature.¹⁴ Overall there was a sense that Modern Hebrew was a weak discipline at CDS, partly due to the breadth of the school's Jewish studies program which included a healthy dose of ritual and philosophy in addition to (and sometimes in place of) a tighter focus on Modern Hebrew.¹⁵ Along with Hebrew, CDS students studied a range of Biblical texts including prophetic works such as Jeremiah, and the center of the eleventh grade curriculum was an in-depth and thematic exploration of the Book of Genesis designed to touch upon human elements of the Bible's earliest narratives such as jealousy, lust and loneliness that students could not have appreciated as young children. Finally, the Rabbinics curriculum explored the core classical texts of Jewish ritual and ethics.

As in the secular or "general studies" program, classes were tracked by level and even language. Students could elect to enroll in Jewish studies classes from the "*masoret*" (tradition) or "*limud*" (textual study) tracks. Classes from the *limud* track were taught in their original language of Hebrew or Aramaic. Even within this challenging track, students were grouped into hierarchically leveled (and labeled) classes such as "Talmud-A" or "Bible-C." *Masoret* classes generally drew a more religiously committed strata of the school's population, though there was a diversity of beliefs and affiliations within this track of students just as there was throughout the rest of the school.

¹⁴ This includes literature that was committed to writing beginning in the early second century of the Common Era. Such texts as Mishnah, Talmud and Midrash include the "law and lore" of the Jewish people and describe the approach of the early Rabbinic elite to both ritual practice as well as their sense of ethics and spirituality.

¹⁵ Students who came to the school from the neighboring Schechter routinely pointed out the differences in their preparation for working in Hebrew, either spoken or textual.

The most significant characteristic which distinguished the *masoret* from *limud* classes was the fact that *masoret* classes were overwhelmingly taught from translated, English sources with little reference to the original Hebrew texts. While healthy debate could be found in some of the *masoret* classrooms, there was a notable lack of rigor in these classes as the content was looser, less well curricularized and less demanding than the more challenging *limud* track. Some students even confessed that, despite their strong Hebrew skills, they chose classes from this track in order to minimize their workload or save time for them to invest in getting the kind of grades which would win them acceptance at competitive colleges. Faculty also saw the *masoret* classes as less worthy of significant preparation. They approached the responsibility of teaching these classes less as an exercise in academic excellence and more as an opportunity to shape student attitudes and develop their loyalty to the Jewish people. As a teacher in the *masoret* track who led an honors class, I was met with stunned silence when I demanded that my students worked with Hebrew text. Apparently, this was rarely done. At the same time, the director of the school's religious studies program urged me repeatedly in emails to set high expectations for this class.

In addition to the various components of the general and Jewish studies curricula, students were required to attend prayer services daily as part of the school program. Each of the prayer services was conducted in accordance with Orthodox tradition, meaning that a traditional liturgy was used and public prayers were led by males. Another service offered young women an opportunity to lead most parts of the prayer services in a single gender setting. In deference to Orthodox norms, when male and female students shared a common space for prayers, the room was divided in two by a *mechitzah* (barrier). At

CDS the *mechitzah* was about five feet high and while students could easily see over it to the opposite side of the room, it clearly cordoned off separate spaces for the different genders. While most older students attended a large service with the separate seating described above, younger students were assigned to small groups which combined the goals of prayer and an educational opportunity to learn more about the roots of Jewish liturgy, to discuss theology or simply to begin the day with a relaxed half hour in the morning until scheduled classes began.

While calculus and theology framed two important elements of the CDS curriculum, the school was committed to offering its students a wealth of experiences for growth. In addition to intellectual and spiritual concerns, CDS supported an impressive athletic program that included soccer, cross country, basketball and baseball across the year. Only a football team was lacking, possibly because of the school's size but also due to the difficulty of finding other teams in a league that would not play on the Jewish Sabbath, when most non-religious activities were restricted. Instead CDS's basketball teams competed in tournaments throughout North America, as far South as Tennessee and as far North as Toronto. Sports were obviously a central part of the CDS experience and students were die hard fans, rallying for each other in winning years as well as dry seasons.

In addition to athletics, CDS invested in a state of the art theater complete with full audio-visual and lighting systems. The school produced two impressive plays each year that highlighted its students' obvious talents. A well stocked art studio allowed other avenues for creativity, as did the schools impressive array of extra-curricular organizations and clubs including a yearbook, school newspaper, literature journal and

even a philosophy society. Students were strongly encouraged to devote their energy towards charitable causes, and a youth division of Woodville's Jewish Federation drew some of its strongest volunteers from CDS. Finally, the school aggressively encouraged its students to avail themselves of outside internships in hospitals, labs and even an aquarium. Without a doubt CDS deserved its reputation as a strong college preparatory institution, an important reputation in a city that hosted outstanding non-Jewish prep schools as well.

While it was clear that CDS's high school models itself after other local prep schools, it was less clear what path the school should take in setting the religious tenor of its faculty and curriculum. From one side, the school was always part of an Orthodox synagogue. And yet, there were several other Jewish high schools in town that catered to the Orthodox community's Black Hat and Modern branches. But no school offered a welcoming setting for families from the non-Orthodox sector of the community, those that might not dress in the Orthodox "uniform" or scrupulously observe Shabbat.¹⁶ Some families attended the local Solomon Schechter, an affiliate of the Conservative movement whose program only extended to grade eight. Other students attended a Reform day school through grade eight, and also wanted an opportunity to continue their education in a Jewish setting through high school. Finally, there were members of Sha'arey, many of whom did not exactly fit the ideals of dress or piety that were expected at other Orthodox high schools in town. The natural constituency for CDS's high school would include the most committed graduates of Reform and Conservative institutions, along with students from Sha'arey's middle school. To make this proposition work,

¹⁶ At least one parent of a child at CDS reported being turned away from one of the local Orthodox day schools when she requested an application. After a brief set of questions about her background and level of religious observance, the principal of the school declared "I don't think we are the place for you."

CDS would need to be broad enough and inclusive enough to make all parties feel at home under one roof.

Toward the goal of breadth and inclusion, CDS chose to affiliate with a network of other schools which identify themselves as “Jewish community day schools.”¹⁷ The choice of affiliation was quite significant, given that one might have otherwise expected that a school built by the Rabbi of Sha’arey on its grounds and funded by contributions from the Orthodox affiliated community might be expected to affiliate with Torah U’Mesorah¹⁸, a national coalition of Orthodox schools. While Torah U’Mesorah began as a network of schools that served students from all backgrounds, there were early indications that its leadership sought to mold its students into a particular image of the ideal Jew, rather than affirming or validating the existing religious commitments of students’ families (Bulman, 1970). Such an affiliation would have been difficult for a school that needed to preserve good relations with Reform and Conservative feeder schools. Instead, CDS declared that the creation of a diverse religious community was at the core of its mission,¹⁹ and it sought the only national affiliation available which supported such a stance. The school features this aspect of its culture prominently, and CDS’s recruiting materials proudly welcome “the widest spectrum of Jewish practice and belief” within its student body.

¹⁷ See the web site of the Network for Jewish Community Day Schools at www.Ravsak.org.

¹⁸ The name Torah U’Mesorah refers to the dual traditions of Bible as well as the teachings of early rabbinic sages.

¹⁹ CDS mission statement described the school as “a Jewish, co-educational college preparatory school. Its purpose is to educate Jewish students from preschool through high school. The student body is diverse, including families with varying religious, economic, and social backgrounds.” Needless to say, diversity was a relative concept in a school that educated solely Jewish people. It might challenge our notion of diversity to explore such issues of “in-group” pluralism. Nonetheless, real and deep differences exist which divide and sometimes create intense friction between contemporary American Jews. For works which explore the depths of intra-communal tensions in contemporary Jewish culture, see Freedman (2000) and Wertheimer (1997, 1999a).

CDS has been successful in drawing a study body that is indeed quite diverse with respect to religious practice. Some boys wandered the hallways with heads uncovered, despite a dress code which required a *kippah* (a head covering, worn out of modesty and respect for God) at all times, while others wore *tzitzit* (ritual fringes proscribed in the Book of Numbers) that hung out conspicuously and marked them as more observant. Some of the girls consistently wore the “uniform” of Orthodox female teens in the form of a calf-length skirt and a shirt or blouse that covered the elbows and revealed no cleavage, while others chose tight slacks and often adjusted their uniform polo shirts to keep backsides and belly buttons covered. Some students observed Shabbat, while others did not. Some kept Kosher, while others ran out to McDonalds during lunch break for a snack that was definitely not rabbinically sanctioned. Some were passionately engaged in daily prayers. At least a few sat in the back row talking or even napping during services. Students clearly did affiliate with each denomination of synagogue in town, most of them Conservative, then Orthodox, Reform and Reconstructionist.²⁰

If the student body was religiously diverse, it was at the same time quite culturally homogeneous. It is worth noting from the outset that the parameters of “suburban” and “Jewish” impose limits that challenge any true notion of diversity. Students at CDS were overwhelmingly Caucasian, and a tuition of \$12,500 a year in 2006 most certainly limited economic diversity. More than anything else, the school felt suburban. There were geeks. There were jocks. As I discovered in conversations with faculty, there were kids doing drugs (though very little drug culture in the school) and others experimenting sexually. There were preppies gunning for a Harvard admission, and even a few Goths

²⁰ For an introduction to the thinking of Reconstructionist Judaism, see Kaplan, Goldsmith and Scult (1991). For more on the life and intellectual development of Mordechai Kaplan, Reconstructionism’s seminal thinker, see Gurock and Schachter (1998).

who cruised the halls listening to screeching heavy metal music from their iPods.

Basically, there was every variety of privileged American teenager that I would expect to find in any other suburban high school (Milner, 2004; Peshkin, 2001). It was just that some of them observed the Sabbath, and all of them were very cautious to remember that when you took your observant friends out to lunch, you had to drive an extra mile past McDonalds to eat at the Kosher Bite.

The most significant discontinuity in school culture was represented by the Judaic studies teaching faculty. Due to its proximity to a sizable Black Hat yeshivah community (and certainly as a result of deliberate hiring decisions), the school employed a number of Judaic studies educators who brought the conservative world view, theology and sociological norms of the yeshivah into the school.²¹ The result was a range of stark differences in culture, politics and religious practice that regularly manifested itself between the yeshivah trained faculty and their students. For example, educators from the Black Hat community often had large families, a lifestyle choice which created acute economic gaps between the faculty and their affluent students. While male administrators and senior clergy in CDS's host synagogue were openly greeted with a hug by female congregants, faculty in the school were scrupulous not to shake hands with members of the opposite sex out of "modesty."²² While both students and faculty viewed

²¹ These staff members also rejected many of the tenets of Modern Orthodoxy, especially the notion that non-Jewish culture holds intrinsically valuable ideas or the idea that communal norms around issues such as gender roles should adapt over time. For more on the nature of schismatic currents within Judaism, see Katz (1998).

²² It is worth noting how rich the issue of "modesty" is in reflecting the complicated nature of the standards that govern Orthodox communal norms. While "modesty" has its roots in a set of religious dictates that impact men and women's individual behavior equally, the sociological construct of "modesty" overwhelmingly impacts women's behavior, particularly dress. While this pattern has religious roots, it devolves into a powerful set of behavioral and sociological norms which rapidly lose any connection whatsoever to religious life. I would argue that such standards of dress, hair covering and socially regulated gender limits form a pattern that maintains cohesive in-group identities for their practitioners by

the existence of the modern, political state of Israel as a compelling fact of modern Jewish life, faculty members gently hedged their appreciation for Israel by grounding it in religious terms which downplayed the importance of the contemporary secular state. With few exceptions, the Judaics faculty of CDS represented a stark diversion from the social, cultural and religious norms of all other participants in the life of the school.

The result for CDS was a dizzying *mélange* of different approaches to Judaism that swirled about, in potential conflict and cooperation, under one roof. All of the Jewish studies faculty whom I interviewed expressed an appreciation for the need to deal with these religious and cultural differences between themselves and their students. This meeting place, between faculty and students, the yeshivah and the suburbs, between those who snack at McDonalds and those who believed it was a sin to eat non-kosher meat, became a source of endless fascination during my year of field work. Somehow, it seemed that students, faculty and administrators managed to weave disparate, even mutually exclusive threads of identity, belief and religious practice into a single fabric. Just how did the threads of that tapestry all hang together?

Research Question

The goal of this study was to explore the following question: How does a culturally heterogeneous group of faculty and students negotiate the challenge of communal participation in the high school division of one Jewish day school? The question merits some significant commentary.

distancing them from the sociological norms of contemporary western society. Certainly, the whole phenomenon merits much further research.

First, I define the participants in CDS as “culturally heterogeneous.” While it might be tempting to identify religious diversity as an appropriate yardstick for understanding the differences that exist within CDS, I suggest that religious differences represent only one of the multiple variables that came into play in the life of CDS. By approaching culture broadly, I opened myself to the possibility that a range of notions and experiences including family history, ethnicity, race, class, language and politics all joined the variable of religious affiliation as equally valid points of reference. In some cases, it was possible that particular manifestations of Jewish life (for example, religious observance) might dovetail or even interact with other cultural categories, such as political convictions or the scripting of gender roles. For this reason, it was critical to include the fullest range of phenomena that expressed Jewish cultural identity.

Second, I deliberately located the analytical arena of this ethnography in the spaces where faculty and students interacted. Such spaces need not be physically proximate, interactive or overtly dialogical. It was just as important to observe how students and faculty experienced each other, described, imagined and even disdained one another away from each other’s presence. Regardless of setting, the cognitive core of this study at all times brings the overlap, appreciation and even conflict between faculty and students to the fore. The simple justification for this framework was the fact that these two groups were characterized by differences so deep and profoundly divergent that I, as an outsider and a fieldworker, often marveled at the set of circumstances which brought these two groups together. How these two opposite sides of the coin responded to the institutional claim of “same-ness” was really the overwhelming and compelling story that waited to be told at CDS.

Third, the activity that I sought to characterize in this study was “communal participation.” As Strike (2003, 2004) observed, community can be intimate and thick as easily as it may be genuine but simultaneously weak. At the same time, there are ways of interacting in a shared space that might be objectively real, but still fail to constitute any pattern of communal coherence whatsoever. I took pains not to ask how parties engage in creating “shared community” since, by merely posing the question, I would have already suggested the presence of some kind of community. By directing the analytic focus of this work towards “participation” I reserved judgment about whether any real community existed, or not. I was much more confident from the outset that “participation” was, indeed going on. While Wenger (1999) described several kinds of participatory structures that seem analogous to communities, Lave and Wenger (1991) collectively demonstrated that individuals sometimes “participate” from the periphery by engaging each other at a distance in ways that are genuinely connected, but fundamentally less durable than the parameters which the notion of “community” would suggest.

Fourth, the research question I proposed suggests that “communal participation” is a “negotiated” experience. While I will address theoretical underpinnings of community further, below, it is essential to note that any experience of community is a constructed, fluidly negotiated state of engagements. “Community” is always a moving target that lacks any simple taxonomy. In order to get a sense of community, the researcher is bound to eschew simple or preformed notions of how people understand and behave with one another. Additionally, the notion that community emerges out of a dynamic state of flux demanded that this research adopt a method of observation which

deliberately accessed broad categories of experience. I will address this question further in my discussion of ethnographic research methods, below. Again, it is critical to note that my research question did not posit the existence of community *ab initio*, but rather sought to discover patterns of negotiated engagement that might or might not be considered community. As a school that always worked to attract new enrollment, CDS had a vested interest in presenting itself as a community. I do not take it for granted that this claim was accurate. Perhaps CDS was really many communities housed under one roof. Perhaps CDS did not cohere as a shared community at all. My task was to explore, investigate and perhaps to challenge the fundamental notion that community existed at CDS.

Finally, I focused my work to explore the cultural life of only the High School division of CDS. While I will discuss issues of site selection and sampling in further detail, below, it is important to state up front that I do not suggest that this project will be able to generate broad or sweeping conclusions about the character of institutional culture throughout CDS. In such a large institution, it is impossible for one researcher to effectively capture in fine detail the experiences of the whole life of the school.²³ Accordingly, I deliberately narrowed the scope of observation for this study to only the High School division. This allowed me to act as an effective observer in a single site that had a rather compact footprint. Originally, it was my intention to confine the site of observation by bounding it to a single classroom. During my initial field work which

²³ Some ethnographic work in schools has attempted to capture broad and overarching patterns of institutional culture. These studies have engaged multi-person research teams who have devoted unusually long periods of field-work to their host institutions. See Lightfoot (1983) and Spindler (1982). Note that Pomson and Schnoor (2008) also deployed a team of several researchers, working over multiple academic years just to observe one small Canadian school. As a single researcher, it was essential for this study to carefully limit the scope of data that this project could effectively capture.

included the observation of classroom instruction, I discovered that while the classroom experience was very important, it was still a surprisingly shallow cultural vista. The real culture of the school happened in the hallways, in the mailroom, the staff room, at prayer services, in the school assembly hall...as well as the classroom. Rather than limit the scope of my observation, I elected to delineate several focal points that I observed in depth, while simultaneously drawing rich observational data across the entirety of the High School.

Positioning This Study: My Journey to CDS

The introduction to this study would not be complete without touching upon one final issue: Just why study the question of religious pluralism as opposed to any other facet of culture within the life of a school? And why conduct this study at CDS? While I will address the methodological concerns of site selection and sampling strategies in chapter three, below, the questions of why I wanted to conduct this study and at this school extend beyond the parameters of methodology into the realm of biography. Madison (2005) urges the writer to disclose his or her own narrative as a way of making their assumptions and potential biases clear to readers. Such self-disclosure offers positionality, which Madison (2005) defines as an act of "reflexive ethnography," a process of "turning back on ourselves" (p. 7) so that the researcher may reveal his or her how own orientation, privileges and original intent in conducting field work. In responding to Madison's call for positionality, I offer the following reflections on my own personal path to CDS.

The journey began on Friday nights, at our family's dinner table. Friday night dinners at my grandparents' home were magical. And, of course, they were usually

guaranteed to be good meals. Family encircled the table, the cousins played and perhaps the adults later went to temple for Friday night services. After we moved to South Florida, far away from these tight rhythms of family, we kept up the dinners, perhaps minus some of the intimacy and affection. Friday night dinners were still special, and called for extra effort and favorite foods. Even without the generations of my family in attendance, there was nothing really to dislike—except *kiddush* (the prayer over wine sanctifying the Sabbath evening).

My father, at some age that I do not recall, insisted that I recite *kiddush*. Sort of like castor oil, it was supposed to be good for me. It was not that hard, really. You sing the little preface from Genesis. If you got lost and had to mumble a bit of the lead in, that was OK. Then there was the blessing over wine (easy melody, hard to forget). Then the longer main body of the prayer. It was all recited or more likely sung to an uplifting, traditional melody while standing. The entire family would say *amen* or (for extra points) sing ah-ah-meyyyyyyyyn in a lilting major key. True to the optimism of the music, this particular ah-ah-meyyyyyyyyn was always very joyful. We knew that following it we would pass the *kiddush* cup with its sweet sticky wine around, imbibe from the shared family cup and then move on to bread and appetizers.

So, what's to hate? The melody wasn't so hard, but at some point that coincided with being a teenager who no longer went to Hebrew school on Sundays, the text began to fade for me. I didn't remember the Hebrew as clearly as I used to. I used to start brushing up about an hour before dinner. I would peek into a prayer book, opening the Hebrew text from right to left, searching for the blessing so that I might practice. That might have been when I started noticing that my reading fluency in Hebrew was

deteriorating as fast as my adolescent memory. In addition to my own embarrassment over my poor Hebrew skills, I probably had other places to be on a Friday night. In addition, the grandparents who previously served as the center of attention on Friday evenings were over a thousand miles away. The joyful intimacy did not move south, so all that was left was the text and my own fear of failing to perform adequately for my father.

I remember one evening in particular, sitting in my room before dinner, steeped in anxiety over this little paragraph of Hebrew that was becoming more and more foreign to me. As if I were cramming for a test. I certainly didn't feel "in charge of the material." Indeed, I was somewhat ashamed of my incompetence in leading *kiddush*. That's the evening that all the joy went out of this endeavor.

The disconnect from Jewish life and ritual that started in adolescence followed me to college, where I went out of my way to put as many miles as possible between myself and my family. Jettisoning the Jewish identity of my childhood was part of the process as I enrolled in an elite New England college which later (and quite publicly) took ownership of its well coordinated policy of limiting Jewish enrollment. I was thrilled to spend the first year of college re-inventing myself, and tried on one identity after another as if I were exchanging garments in the changing room of a clothing store. By the end of that year, I was surprised to find that none of the outfits felt right. I was left utterly and totally bereft of an answer to a relatively simple question: Who are you? What do you believe in? Lacking an answer, I went back to the basics of childhood by attending Friday night dinners with other Jewish students. The evenings began with the familiar

words and melody of *kiddush*, which I now remembered and often led for the entire group. Something fit.

Realizing that the Jewish identity of my adolescence was grossly concatenated, I began to explore the range of what my own identity could offer. The study of Modern Hebrew led to courses in Jewish philosophy and ultimately a hunger for greater knowledge of traditional rituals that were overlooked in my household. I began to observe the limits of the Jewish dietary code known as *kashrut*, and embraced the spiritual discipline of daily prayer. Finally, I felt as if I knew who I was: A Jewish young adult whose life was shaped by the patterns of an ancient tradition. Here lay the final problem. Jewish tradition, especially as it relates to ritual, is grounded in over 2,500 years of textual discourse. The authentic voices of this tradition speak in a range of languages from the various permutations of Hebrew through the Aramaic that frames the great Talmudic debates and even the Yiddish and Ladino dialects that were innovated across the centuries. These were all, quite literally, closed books to me. Having discovered the identity that I most truly desired to embrace, I realized that I would have much work to do in order to overcome my utter illiteracy.

With my college degree completed, I began planning a year of study in Israel that would offer me the sense of authentic voice which had eluded me. Landing in Jerusalem, I found a program that was open to beginners and ideologically progressive. It was a year of firsts. For the first time, I seriously studied Biblical Hebrew, then the classical commentaries of Rashi, the legal code of the Mishnah and later explications from the Talmud... I worshipped in synagogues that ranged from extremely liberal to outright fundamentalist. With each new experience during this year, I grew more confident that I

had an authentic stake in this tradition, and that the tradition itself was more aesthetically pleasant and morally complex than old fables and childhood memories. Several memories reflect important passages of this year, a period that was not without its challenges.

First, there was the incredible difficulty of learning to navigate a textual cannon which was mostly new to me. I deliberately enrolled in an upper level class that was conducted solely in Hebrew, just to push myself harder in learning the language. Some days I sat by in exasperation, capturing the most important elements of a lecture only to miss the crux of the teacher's argument for lack of a few stray words. To this day, I remember evenings that I sat awake late into the evening working my way through a Talmudic argument about property law in a mix of Hebrew and Aramaic. I recited a short text that felt impenetrable over two dozen times, only to feel that I still lacked a complete grasp of its logic. For the entire year, I regretted that shallow Jewish education that I had received as a child, and pushed ahead as if to make up for lost time. I was hungry to acquire fundamentals that others, especially those from Orthodox households, had learned by rote in their earliest years of schooling.

The encounter with Orthodoxy was another important passage of this year. As a child, the denizens of the black hat world felt like aliens due to their insularity and inexplicably formal clothing even in the depths of a Florida summer. Living in Jerusalem, I began to see past the "uniform" and experience the humanity of individuals within this community. When an acquaintance within the pious Lubavitch community invited me to his wedding, I accepted reluctantly. Expecting a dour but spiritual event, I instead joined a throng of nearly five hundred guests who spent the evening, drinking,

carousing and dancing (with men and women on opposite sides of a huge partition). The intensity of the evening stunned me nearly as much as the volume of food and drink consumed. These black hats...knew how to party!

Other experiences were not so uplifting. One Shabbat afternoon I strolled through the outskirts of Meah She'arim, the bastion of the ultra-Orthodox community. A disoriented driver stopped and attempted a quick U-turn through the neighborhood, but not before a group of children gathered and began a chant of “*Shabbos!*” (Sabbath)²⁴ in a menacing tone, prompting the driver’s hasty retreat. Another day, I encountered a female friend who earlier had joined a larger group of women that held an organized prayer service for women at the gender-segregated Western Wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. A group from the black hat community accosted them, shouting obscenities, making threats and even throwing chairs at these women who insisted upon bringing their feminist sensibilities to this historical and religious site. My friend was beside herself, a mess of tears, outrage and sobbing at the sense of betrayal that she experienced at being treated this way by other Jews. As angered as I was, I still managed to look past the black and white nature of the Orthodox community, finding shades of gray in the small human gestures of kindness or respect that I experienced as a guest in the black hat world.

Three important lessons of this year in Israel set the backdrop for the research that I would conduct at CDS a decade and a half later. First, I left with an absolute

²⁴ The driver was desecrating the sanctity of the Sabbath day, on which observant Jews do no work. To preserve a sacred environment, some neighborhoods in Jerusalem close off or even barricade the streets so that cars will not pass by. On occasion, unwitting drivers have been confronted or even found stones thrown at them by residents of these neighborhoods.

commitment to traditional textual study. I appreciated how hard I had to work in order to learn fundamentals that many students who attended Jewish day schools took for granted. Second, I came to appreciate the complexity of cultural forces which could set the world of black hat Orthodoxy at odds with other parts of the Jewish community. Finally, I returned with a personal stake in crossing the boundaries which separated different sub-communities of Jews. I realized that the black hat world could be both alienating and enriching for outsiders, and was determined to maintain connections to this world even as I stood outside of it. Each of these lessons in some way matched an aspect of how CDS saw itself, and afforded me the ability to appreciate the remarkable set of exchanges which comprised the life of this school. As an individual who had embraced a deeper level of religious observance and actively sought out connections with the Orthodox world, I arrived with the proper mixture of inside knowledge, sympathetic understanding and enough dispassionate judgment to tell CDS's story honestly. The many points of this personal journey served me well as I entered the field.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

In this chapter, I will establish a general context for the study of culture in one Jewish day school within the parameters of a larger scholarly literature. I will address three areas in varying degrees of depth. These include the history of Jewish education in America, the study of culture in education generally and the study of Jewish day school education as a subset of research on the contemporary Jewish experience. My goal is to supply background knowledge that will be crucial for the reader, while at the same time demonstrating gaps in the research literature that this work fills.

A Social History of the Jewish Day School

The Contemporary Boom in Day School Education

Within the last decade, the contemporary Jewish day school has attained a stature that would have been unimaginable just one generation ago. Marvin Schick, the premier demographer of the Jewish day school in the United States, reported day school enrollment levels near 205,000 students for the academic year 2003-4 (Schick, 2005). That represents an impressive jump of 11% over five years since the last survey of American Jewish day school enrollment (Schick, 2000). Recent estimates have suggested that between 25% and 30% of all Jewish children in America attended Jewish day schools.²⁵ In addition to numerical growth, the Jewish day school has broadened its

²⁵ See Carol Ingall's (1998) extrapolation from The Commission on Jewish Education in North America (1991) and Schiff and Schneider (1993). The 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey found a 29% day school / yeshivah attendance rate in their sample for children between the ages of 6 and 17 (United Jewish Communities, 2003). This percentage enrollment figure represents a startling change from the beginning of the twentieth century, when David Rudavsky reported day school enrollment figures of less than two percent for New York City's Jewish community (Rudavsky, 1945). Current figures should receive nuanced treatment, given the fact that day school enrollments correlate strongly to religious denominational patterns in American Jewish life. See Barry Shrage in Paulson (2004), on the skewed

geographic base far beyond historically dense Jewish population centers like New York City and Los Angeles, giving the current day school expansion important “breadth” as well as “depth.”²⁶ Philanthropic interest in day school education has also surged, and major Jewish funders have made impressive gifts both to individual schools,²⁷ as well as the communal institutions which promote day school education.²⁸ By the end of the twentieth century, all denominational branches of the Jewish community formally united in affirming the premise that Jewish day school education represented the educational gold standard for the Jewish community.²⁹ The fact that such a pronouncement would have been unthinkable a few decades ago,³⁰ makes the history of this development all the more compelling.

representation of Orthodox children in Jewish day schools, with 90% attending day schools, compared to the Reform Movement’s rate which Shrager claims as 5% (Paulson, 2004).

²⁶ Schick (2005) pointed out the geographical diversification of the day school movement, noting that 40 American states plus the District of Columbia hosted day schools. Schick counted a day school presence in 38 states five years earlier (Schick, 2000). While numerically impressive, the figures point to a larger trend within the American Jewish community. Wertheimer claimed it as a culturally significant fact that every American Jewish community with more than 7,500 Jews or more claimed at least one Jewish day school (Wertheimer, 1999). He argued that this constituted clear proof that the Jewish day school had become an indispensable fixture of modern Jewish life. At the same time, patterns of geographic centralization remained strong: Both Schick’s 2000 and 2005 survey showed that New York City alone accounted for roughly 40% of the total day school enrollment in the United States (Schick, 2005).

²⁷ One high profile gift of five million dollars sparked controversy when the Milken Family Foundation donated the funds with the proviso that the recipient school be renamed as the “Milken Community High School” (Lewis, 1995). In Boston the Jewish community’s Combined Jewish Philanthropies secured an anonymous gift of 45 million dollars from several local families to support day schools in and around Boston in one of the largest educational (i.e. non-capital) gifts to Jewish day schools ever recorded (Paulson, 2004).

²⁸ See Archer (1997 and 1998a), on the growth of the day school think-tank PEJE: The Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education.

²⁹ See the June 1999 Report of the Task Force on Jewish Day School Viability and Vitality (JESNA, 1999) and The Commission on Jewish Education in America (1991).

³⁰ Schick closed the executive summary of his 2000 day school survey with the wry observation that he was reporting events from the close of “a century that began with yeshivas and day schools being denigrated as old-world institutions” (Schick, 2000, p. iii).

An Overview of Historical Writing on the Jewish Day School

Historical writing on the Jewish day school tends to fall into one of three categories: institutional histories, social histories and demographic studies. Alexander Dushkin (1918) wrote one of the first significant histories of Jewish education in 1918 as a study of New York City's Jewish community, a work which Rudavsky (1945) later updated. Both are valuable, as they provide some of the first research, especially primary sources that might otherwise have been lost. Yet both focus overwhelmingly on the day school as an institution whose demographic impact merits an accurate tally, not a social phenomenon whose dynamics reveal something critical about the character of Jewish life in America. A similar dynamic informs the work of Marvin Schick (2000, 2005) whose studies are overwhelmingly demographic. While persuasive in documenting the rising enrollment of Jewish day schools, Schick offers little beyond speculation with regard to the reason why individuals, particularly outside the Orthodox community, elect to enroll in these schools.

The final strand of research on Jewish day schools is much more of a social history. I reference this literature at length, below, as this body of work explores not just why interest in Jewish day schools has grown over the last century, but also what that phenomenon might reveal to help understand the nature of Jewish identity. Among the social historians, Schiff (1966) was visionary but tendentious in attempting to argue that the Jewish day school represented a perfectly worked out synthesis of American and Jewish immigrant identities. Ackerman (1975) and Rauch (1978) were much more nuanced, suggesting that traditional patterns of Jewish education were dramatically recast under the influence of Americanizing tendencies, and that the structure of Jewish

education reflected a conflicted process of grappling with what it meant to be American. Kassof (1993) injected a unique element of economic critique, positing that day schools were an upper middle class phenomenon, adopted by some Jews as markers of their rising wealth and status. The two strongest voices for exploring the intersection of schooling and Jewish cultural identity came from Brumberg (1986) and Wertheimer (1999). Brumberg's work focused more closely on the early twentieth century, a time when Jews had little interest in Jewish schools given that their top priority was the agenda of assimilation into American life and raising their economic prospects. By contrast, Wertheimer framed the day school as a critical force in the preservation of Jewish ethnic distinctiveness during an era of rampant assimilation. The work of these social historians forms a crucial backdrop to the questions of negotiated identity that I pose in my study of CDS. Given the complexity of the day school movement itself, a brief history of its development will help the reader better understand the stage upon which the cultural interactions at CDS took place. This begins in the mid-eighteenth century.

The First Day Schools

The Shearith Israel school of New York (founded 1760) arguably represents the first Jewish day schools of the "Colonial" era before the early-1800s, during which time the Jewish community was largely composed of Spanish/Portuguese immigrants.³¹

Schiff (1966, pp. 20-1) pointed out the lack of documentary evidence during this period

³¹ See Gartner (1969) for copies of the school's founding correspondence. The school itself must have experienced a series of successes and failures, as it was rechartered in 1808. For documentary sources on the Jewish community in America, see Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (1980). The first Jewish arrivals to the new world came from Brazil, fleeing the Spanish Inquisition in 1654. They promptly attracted the attention of Peter Stuyvesant, who called for their expulsion from the city of "New Amsterdam" (Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, 1980).

of Jewish life, and suggested that Jewish education was initially very basic and broadly delivered via informal schools, in houses of worship and by private tutors. Such arrangements would have been similar to the structure of all early-American education, which did not take on any systematic character until the industrial revolution.³² There is little reason to seek any kind of ongoing structure to Jewish education during this early period, and Schiff (1966:20) denied any continuity between these early efforts and later educational arrangements.³³ Rather, the Jewish school seemed to recreate itself several times, constantly varying according to the needs of the day.

The early curriculum of Shearith Israel offered some insight into the cultural priorities of the small community of New York's Spanish Jews. They wanted their children to learn Spanish, English, Hebrew and Math. These subjects represented the cultures of the old country, the new world, religious tradition and the need to do business in American mercantile society. The fact that these newcomers decided to establish a religiously affiliated school is entirely unremarkable. Ackerman suggested that Spanish Jews of eighteenth century New York were merely following larger social norms, since most education at this time was "parochial." More than ethnic or religious separatism, Ackerman (1989, p. 72) referenced the Shearith Israel charter in his argument that "...above all, the processes of acculturation and assimilation...mark the Jewish experience in America." He interpreted the school curriculum as an attempt to join the

³² See Carlton (1966), Cremin (1980) and Tyack (1974) on the development of American education during this time frame. Also see Gartner (1969) regarding the range of Jewish schools that existed during this early period.

³³ A number of writers argue that earlier models of Jewish education exert compelling influence on the modern Jewish day school. Kasoff suggested that the Shearith Israel school presented an early model of the contemporary dual-curriculum day school (Kasoff, 1993). Others suggested that ancient patterns of Talmudic education shaped the American Jewish day school, a claim that I flatly reject. For several of such claims see Fried (1981), Hoffman (1992) and Kasoff (1983).

cultural mainstream by following local patterns, and suggested that the Shearith Israel school deliberately subordinated religious study to secular studies (Ackerman, 1975). Hence, the first lessons of the Colonial/Spanish period might well be the observation that even in their “parochial” schools, Jewish newcomers to the New World adopted the cultural models of those who came before them. The next wave of German immigrants soon put this proposition to the test.

Emergence and Retreat of the Day School

While Jews of Spanish and Portuguese descent were the first identifiable community of immigrants to the United States, their numbers were small and they made little real impact on the American scene. The German immigration of early to mid-nineteenth century was a dramatic change. Two distinct groups of Germans came to America, starting around 1815. The first were poor peddlers who lacked Jewish education and made economic survival their first concern (Gartner, 1969; Kasoff, 1993). Later arrivals constituted an urban, cultured and secular community who embraced Napoleonic political reforms in Germany and faced a tragic change of fortune after Napoleon’s death. Over half a century, the open, non-sectarian forum of German society suddenly reverted to xenophobic patterns which excluded non-Christian “foreigners.”³⁴ German Jews left for America in droves. While some Germans came from pious Jewish households, the plurality of the community were religiously disaffected or had adopted progressive interpretations of Jewish life that Orthodox leaders viewed as radical, even

³⁴ The 1815 Congress of Vienna restored the *status quo ante* by undoing Napoleonic reforms. By 1830 the Jewish population of America grew from a meager pocket of individuals to a community of roughly 50,000 individuals. The major immigration of German Jews continued until 1860, raising the Jewish population to approximately 150,000 (Cohen, 1992). The final, largest wave of German immigration was motivated by the failure of the German Democratic Revolution of 1848, upon which German Jews staked their future. Having lost, the remaining Jewish liberals and intellectuals fled the country (Kasoff, 1993).

impious, for their day.³⁵ Cohen (1992) argued that the German immigrant elite drew directly upon their European experience of religious persecution to become forceful advocates of the American secular state. Ultimately, the commitment to a secular commonwealth heavily impacted the German Jewish community's approach to education.

While many Germans were oriented towards Liberal or Reform Judaism, this position alone was theoretically compatible with the creation of Jewish schools.³⁶ Still, the overwhelming political stance of German Jewish Americans was that American institutions, including schools, should be non-sectarian. The most senior leaders of the German-dominated Reform movement argued against allowing religion into the public schools.³⁷ The creation of Jewish schools was just as bad, as such an initiative on the part of Jews would “(erect) a wall between themselves and the Gentile community” (Kasoff, 1993, p. 22). All the same, history and ideology rarely move in lock-step. German Jews did create schools in places like Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York and Chicago for varied reasons including religious piety (Schiff, 1966) or simple dissatisfaction with the quality of available schooling (Gartner, 1969).

³⁵ While it would be a mistake to call the majority of German Jewish immigrants “secular,” this community overwhelmingly rejected traditional Jewish categories of ritual life and observance. Instead, many reform minded German Jews sought religious fulfillment through the creation of a universal family of mankind. Philosophical erudition and the quest for justice became the “goods” of community, in place of earlier ritual categories that defined the individual's place and religious duties. For greater background on the nature of German Jewish religious life and Jewish emancipation, see Mendes-Flohr and Reinarz (1980) and Meyer (1967, 1988).

³⁶ Indeed, there are a significant number of Reform Jewish day schools today (Schick, 2005). Also note the final sections of Zeldin (1988).

³⁷ Isaac Mayer Wise, one of the most important leaders of the Reform Jewish community, argued vigorously against the intrusion of religion into civil and secular institutional life. Regarding schools, he wrote in an 1869 edition of *The Israelite* that: “We are opposed to Bible reading in the schools. The Public schools are institutions for the education of free, intelligent, and enlightened citizens...To this end we need good secular schools and nothing else. That state has not religion. Having no religion, it cannot impose any religious instruction on the citizen, adult or child” (Zeldin, 1988, pp. 444-5).

The one serious aberration to the otherwise predominant pattern of German educational secularism appeared in 1843, when a group of New York Jewish parents protested the use of a heavily Christianized textbook in their local common school. When a municipal committee was formed to study the parents' complaints, it responded by rebuking the Jewish community and reminding its members that they were new arrivals "in a Christian country" (Zeldin, 1988, p. 43). A string of German Jewish day schools opened in short order, and as late as 1851, articles in the Jewish press extolled the virtues of New York City's Jewish day schools and warned of the dangers that "Gentile schools" posed for Jewish children (Gartner, 1969).³⁸ In fact, the whole controversy had much more to do with Catholics than Jews. The period of the German Jewish immigration overlapped with a much larger wave of immigration by poor Irish Catholics fleeing famine. New York City's Protestant establishment was desperate to Americanize the newly arriving throng, and turned to the public schools as a vehicle for cultural absorption. At the same time, Protestants hoped to strip the new arrivals of their "offensive" Papist beliefs.³⁹ The agenda of Protestant religious indoctrination reached such heights that the public schools of the time were commonly referred to as the "Protestant schools."

By the mid-1850s, the New York State Legislature took action to compel the cessation of effort to advance a Protestant agenda within the public school. By 1855, local wards gained authority to select textbooks for their schools. The "Normal School" was finally established as a public non-sectarian institution. The Jewish day schools of

³⁸ Sarna (1998) also suggested a long and enduring pattern among wealthy Jews of avoiding the public schools.

³⁹ See Ravitch (1974). For further background on the development of Catholic schooling in America, see Grant and Hunt (1992), McAfee (1998) and Walch (1996).

that day, Dushkin observed, “(were) doomed” (Dushkin, 1918, p. 50). Indeed, within a single year each and every one of the New York Jewish schools had closed their doors (Zeldin, 1988; Brumberg, 1986). The Normal schools were safely non-sectarian, they were free, and they offered an important promise of social and economic mobility to a displaced community that sought brighter futures for its second generation.⁴⁰ By 1870, the German Jewish community had cast its lot firmly and unequivocally with the public school system (Zeldin, 1989). In such a setting, German Jews grew financially prosperous. They established Sunday schools to transmit Jewish culture and religion. They became secure as Americans. It was a calm before the storm.

Immigration and Dislocation

In Russia a chaotic series of dislocations was about to begin. Tsar Alexander II freed peasants from their subservient position to landowners in the mid-1850s. A national draft sought to create civic unity but the Jewish community rightly feared the “Russification” of its children. Simultaneously, progressive Jewish intellectuals urged the abandonment of traditional religious study in favor of modern languages. Intra-communal conflict pushed some Jews towards more extreme positions of cultural and religious absolutism, as others thronged to enter the Russian universities. The Jewish community experienced rapid population growth, and began migrating to southern provinces like Odessa. As the Jewish presence in Russian life expanded, so did mistrust and persecution. When revolutionaries assassinated Alexander II in March of 1881, it

⁴⁰ Rudavsky (1945) mentioned the removal of the monitorial system as one additional factor that contributed to the shift towards public schooling for the German Jewish community. We should note that ideology was not the only factor which motivated the decision of parents in the late nineteenth century. As Gartner (1969) noted, the search for quality education was often a contributing factor to the establishment of Jewish private schooling.

sparked a powder keg of disaffection towards Russian Jews. A series of pogroms followed over the next two decades. Jews faced coercive civil restrictions under the May laws of 1882 which limited geographic mobility, livelihood, and expelled scores of Jews from institutions of higher learning.

These drastic “push” factors combined with the lure of the New World to set off an unprecedented wave of immigration that brought around 2,000,000 Russian Jews to the United States in an extremely short period of time.⁴¹ In New York City alone, the Jewish population went from approximately 60,000 in 1886 to nearly 1,500,00 by 1918. Even more severe than this numerical change was the scope of cultural dislocation experienced by Russian Jews who were catapulted from “medieval to modern society” in a few short years (Rudavsky, 1945, pp. 42-3). The new arrivals soon learned that modernity is the solvent of tradition” (Hertzberg, 1979, p. 3) as they struggled to recreate the social and educational institutions they knew from home. Some communal institutions took root,⁴² but on the whole the new immigrants found themselves culturally overwhelmed by America (Rauch 1978).

⁴¹ For more background on the Russian Jewish immigration, see Gartner (2001) and Mendes-Flohr and Reinartz (1980). Note the table of immigration statistics on p. 374. On the cultural integration of Russian Jews into American life and related issues of immigrant ethnicity, see Brumberg (1986), Vermeulen and Perlmann (2000) and Mendes-Flohr and Reinartz (1980).

⁴² Much scholarship has explored the range of immigrant cultural institutions that grew up during this period (Cassedy, 1997; Horowitz, 1989; Simon, 1997). One important educational institution that the immigrants knew in Eastern Europe was the *heder*, a small schoolhouse where very young boys would learn the basics of Hebrew reading and prayer. In more religious communities, older boys would proceed to another level of schooling that offered instruction in Rabbinic texts (Scharfstein, 1943). While Russian immigrants created a version of the *heder* in the United States, it lacked trained teachers and communal supervision. What, in Russia, was the most elementary level of religious schooling became for many Jews the only available educational forum. See Dushkin (1918) and Rudavsky (1945) for a review and thorough critique of the American *heder*.

School and Cultural Agency

The German pioneers, once aliens themselves but now prospering as Uptown Americans, looked at the new immigrants with a sense of collective horror.⁴³ The Russian Jews' general poverty, lack of education or English language skills threatened to besmirch the now naturalized German Jews with the stigma of foreignness that they had worked for the past half a century to overcome. Historians differ regarding the character of German Jewish response to the Russian arrivals. Some, like Rauch, suggest that the Germans' unease over the Russian wave of immigration was well founded, as it coincided with a rising American nativist movement.⁴⁴ Waxman claimed that the German community flirted with outright disassociation from the Russian Jews (Waxman, 1999), a stance which the community jettisoned and replaced with an aggressive commitment to engage the new arrivals and expedite their transformation into Americans (Rauch, 1973). Brumberg (1986, pp. 83-6), on the other hand, accused the Germans of deliberately sacrificing Russian Jewish ethnicity to protect their own standing in American society. He argued that the Russians initially succumbed to a program of deculturation since they were not only poor and disorganized but eager to become "American" themselves. All agree, however, that German Jews vigorously supported

⁴³ The depths of German discomfort with their Russian co-religionists is apparent in the public remarks of German women who volunteered their time in the settlement house movement. Rebecca Kohut, the German leader of a German Jewish women's group, called upon other "religiously enlightened matrons of our country, delivered from the oppressor's yoke, (to) dive into the depths of vice to spread culture and enlightenment among our semi-barbaric Russian immigrants..." (Brumberg, 1986, p. 63). The response was somewhat ironic, given the fact that when German Jews began arriving sixty year earlier, they were met with the same lack of enthusiasm by "native" Jews of Spanish descent (Rudavsky, 1945). For a discussion of the Jewish settlement house movement, see Stern (2003).

⁴⁴ Rauch (1973) noted that the nativist movement had a deep impact on American society, and ultimately launched programs of Americanization which sought to break down and replace the cultural character of immigrants.

educational programs to Americanize the Russian immigrants. Most importantly, the uptown Germans urged the Russian Jews into the public schools.⁴⁵

The Germans never needed to push much, as Russian immigrants themselves overwhelmingly sought out the public school system as their point of entry into American society. Schiff (1998) suggested that the immigrants bought into the agenda of Americanization, and aggressively strove to transform their social condition by way of public school education. Ravitch (1974) mentioned a near riot by Jewish immigrant parents from the Lower East Side when overcrowded schools temporarily stopped accepting new students. Meanwhile, Brumberg (1986) suggested that the schools became part of a deliberate struggle over social capital. When the DeWitt Clinton High School was purposely sited on West 59th street in 1906, shunning a downtown location close to the Lower East Side, the student body applauded the exclusion of striving immigrants who should not be allowed to pollute “the healthy life of the West side” (Brumberg, 1986, pp. 183-9). In response, Jewish students commuted from all corners of the City to attend classes at DeWitt. In the race to become a successful American, the public school was seen as a valuable asset precisely because of its culturally transforming power. Learned and religiously observant Jews did not hesitate to enroll their children,⁴⁶ who then “Americanized” at an astounding pace.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Brumberg took the most critical view of German efforts, arguing that German Jewish elites (like Schiff and Warburg) worked with the New York City Board of Education to create a curriculum that would remove the immigrant Jewish stigma. He suggested that German cooperation was not *noblesse oblige*, but rather a calculated attempt to Americanize the newly arrived Russian Jews by wiping away elements of immigrant culture such as language, dress and social mores (Brumberg, 1986).

⁴⁶ No less a scholar than Israel Scheffler attended afternoon Hebrew schools in his early years. While his parents were the descendents of Romanian rabbis and Talmud scholars, they never once considered an option outside of the public school for his elementary education. Scheffler (1995) recalled that his parents “thought of the public school as the emblem of their beloved new country, as solid and authoritative as America itself, therefore requiring no special worry or concern on their own part...Jewish education, unlike

As in the 1850s, the Jewish day school did not stand a chance. Kasoff (1993) suggested that Russian immigrants, eager to become full fledged citizens, overwhelmingly perceived the Jewish school to be un-American. More subtle forces were also at work, including shifting religio-cultural patterns of Jewish life, lack of a coherent Jewish identity and a range of economic forces. Theoretically, Jewish religious sympathies might have encouraged parents who wanted to raise their children as pious Jews to enroll them in a Jewish school. The first problem with this stance is that the Russian Jewish immigrants were never overly pious. While small communities still imposed adherence to Jewish ritual, this observance was not necessarily so durable even in Russia.⁴⁸ By the mid-twentieth century, such basic rituals as the observance of Shabbat and the laws of Kashrut often went unheeded in America (Rudavsky, 1945). The second problem with the argument that Jewish religious sentiments might encourage day school attendance was the fact that very few Jews of the Russian immigrant period constructed their identity in a way that linked formal education with religious authenticity. Although the culture of Eastern Europe was reverential towards its Rabbis

public education, was their own responsibility and they gave it pride of place in the culture of our family” (p. 61).

⁴⁷ Again, Brumberg raised the most serious concerns about what Americanization really meant and how it was conducted. He protested that there was no corner of immigrant experienced not subject to the Americanization agenda. “Overtly and covertly the schools sought to transform the children into Americans and prevent the parents and ghetto society from replicating itself through their children” (Brumberg, 1986, p. 81). The approach included such obvious concerns as language and culture and more subtle curricular topics such as the “Course of Study on Moral Education and Physical Training/Hygiene.” Moreover, Brumberg (1986) suggested that the rise of the NYC Board of education between 1881 and World War One was a blatant attempt to centralize authority over schools at the expense of local control by “un-American” elements. The Americanization agenda created such cultural upheaval that John Dewey joined settlement house leader Jane Addams and in expressing deep concern that the ensuing conflicts between home and school would sever children from parental traditions and destroy any basis for parental authority in the home (Rauch, 1978).

⁴⁸ Morris Raphael Cohen offered a sense of the religious fragmentation of Russian Jewry in *A Dreamer’s Journey*, a memoir of his youth. He recalled that “I left Minsk in 1887 a little animal and I came back an Orthodox pietist. But Minsk was a large metropolitan city...” Cohen was ridiculed for his backwards dress and religious observance. “My mother realized the situation and, despite my mild protest, cut off my payes and obtained clothes for me more like those worn in Minsk” (Brumberg, 1986, p. 51).

and Talmud scholars, this strand of erudite religious experience was always reserved for the elite. While elite religion was overwhelmingly a textual, intellectual experience, the Russian immigrants were traditionalists, not scholars.⁴⁹ To be sure, they saw themselves as good Jews, but the substance of Jewish folk-religion never demanded much formal learning beyond the ability to read a prayer book.⁵⁰

The unifying force of Jewish identity also offered little coherent support or inducement to group action during the Russian immigrant period. While I have already touched on the important fracture between German and Russian Jews, it would be extraordinarily hasty to presume that “Russian” and “Jewish” categories offered any core identity to the nearly two million immigrants of this period. Brumberg (1986) astutely pointed to the utter absence of any larger ethnic consciousness during this era. Instead, he argued that the new immigrants initially viewed regionalism or membership in other distinct Russian local cultures as their prime category of self-definition. It is uncertain that one may speak of an “American Jew” in any meaningful sense up until the post-War suburban boom. If the community lacked a discrete notion of cohesion from within, it also lacked the cultural motivator of extreme anti-Semitism from without to generate unity or encourage investment in Jewish ethnic separatism. (Rudavsky, 1945)

⁴⁹ Rauch (1973) observed that the Russian wave of immigration came at a time when the authority of Jewish scholarship was decidedly on the wane.

⁵⁰ For an example of such patterns of folk religion in a different religious context, See Mary Douglas’ (1970) study of the “Bog Irish,” who posed a vexing problem to the bookish leadership of the Catholic Church. While Jewish folk religion was very durable in the closed communities of Eastern Europe, it did not serve as a strong basis for the maintenance of Jewish life in America. As Rauch (1973) noted: “Elite religion in Judaism is legitimated by codes of Jewish law and the sacred textual tradition. Folk religion on the other hand bases its legitimacy on the practices of the community. Folk religion...can be the more conservative of the two, but once the consensus within the community is broken, it is much more susceptible to radical changes” (p. 101).

The overlap of economic and social factors also dictated against the widespread development of Jewish day schools during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The new Jewish immigrants were often desperately poor, a plight which initially denied resources that might be used to build schools and forced immigrants to expend much available time and energies on economic subsistence. Kasoff (1993) offered an economic analysis of the day school movement, arguing that a lack of financial security was a crucial inhibiting factor during this period. At the same time, the linkage of economic status and cultural self image could stymie the development of day schools even once the immigrants had begun achieving financial success. Joselit argued that precisely as the Russian Jews began to achieve a measure of social mobility and financial success, they tried to distance themselves from cultural reminders “of their immigrant origins and of their un-Americanized selves” (Joselit, 1989, p. 24). Hence, just as they acquired the means to build Jewish schools, the acculturating Russian Jews simultaneously found added incentive to define themselves as American, not foreign.

During this time period, the Jewish afternoon or supplemental school became the preferred educational framework for the 25% of children who received any Jewish education whatsoever.⁵¹ While the consensus of historians is that most Jewish educational programs were extraordinarily poor through the early twentieth century,⁵² some very effective supplemental programs did exist.⁵³ The Uptown German leadership

⁵¹ See Brumberg (1986) and Rudavsky (1945).

⁵² Dushkin,(1918, p. 68) described the poor quality of teachers who staffed the immigrant *heder*, calling them “an obstacle to the progress of Jewish education in America” (p. 68). Others noted the pervasive absence of quality Jewish education during this period. See Rauch (1973), Rudavsky (1945) and Waxman (1999).

⁵³ The “Heder Metukan” that Scheffler (1995) described from his childhood was an outstanding breakthrough. In this arrangement, educational visionaries took the European “basal” reading school and transformed it into a setting that emphasized the intelligent use of Modern Hebrew, encouraged pedagogic creativity and supported the developing hybrid identities of its students.

overwhelmingly invested in the supplemental school as an adjunct of its Americanization agenda⁵⁴ and an emerging corps of Jewish educators came into being. These “Benderly Boys,” led by the visionary Samson Benderly,⁵⁵ were steadfast in their belief that a day school was anachronistic and culturally foreign to American life.⁵⁶ They were persuaded (and persuaded others) that well organized supplemental schools had the best chance of creating a new generation of educated Jews who would be authentically Jewish and American at the same time.⁵⁷ While a number of Jewish day schools were founded during this period,⁵⁸ they enrolled such a small percentage of Downtown New York City Jews⁵⁹ that they were irrelevant to the mainstream of striving, acculturating Jews of their day. The Benderly agenda of public schooling and supplemental Jewish education maintained its dominance in American Jewish education.

⁵⁴ As a disciple of Benderly, Dushkin (1918) noted the role of these schools in promoting “healthy Americanization.” At the same time, Brumberg (1986) suggested that uptown German Jews denied funding to immigrants who wanted to create day schools. Instead, they funded downtown supplemental schools. In some cases, they forced schools to change the language of instruction to English as a condition of funding (Dushkin, 1918).

⁵⁵ On Benderly and his contribution to Jewish education see Ingall (2004), Sarna (1998), Soltes (1949) and Winter (1966). Stern (2004) is particularly effective in contextualizing Benderly’s approach to supplemental education, which was extraordinarily innovative for its time.

⁵⁶ I. Berkson, a student of Benderly and the author of *Theories of Americanization* claimed outright that the Jewish day (“parochial”) school was undemocratic for “segregate(ing) children along lines of creed...” and called upon American Jews to “...create a school system complementary to the public school” (In Ackerman, 1975, p. 424).

⁵⁷ See Schiff (1966) and especially Ackerman (1975) who offered a stark critique of Benderly and his disciples, whom he accused of betraying Jewish educational values.

⁵⁸ Schiff (1966) detailed the founding of several day schools during the period of Russian immigration. Yeshivath Etz Chaim (f. 1887), Yeshivath Yitzchak Elchanan (f. 1897), Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshivah (f. 1900) and the Yeshivah Rabbi Chaim Berlin (f. 1906). These schools demonstrate that some of the Russian immigrants did, indeed, seek an institution devoted to classical Talmudic learning. While these schools later thrived, their impact on the larger experiences of Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was extremely limited.

⁵⁹ Dushkin (1918) reported that Jewish day schools enrolled 938 students by 1918, or just over 2% of the Jewish children in New York City.

Reassessing Ethnicity and Building Brides

While the overwhelming force of Jewish educational efforts was tailored towards the Americanization agenda, a small trend away from cultural assimilation was growing. While the *heder* ultimately vanished in America, due to its ineffectiveness, a generation of early immigrants still held on to the institution as a way of preserving ethnic ties to their former homelands (Gartner, 1969). The rise of Zionism also had a critical impact on American Jews. Hertzberg probably overstated when he credited Zionism with “ending the American melting pot” (Hertzberg, 1979, p. 222), but the growing nationalist movement (combined with the influence of Samson Benderly and his students) spurred a critical rise in concern for Hebrew language and culture (Rudavsky, 1945). The 1917 Balfour declaration had a considerable impact on all school curricula, dramatically elevating the stature and quality of Hebrew instruction. At the same time, the advent of an anti-Semitic nativist movement offered enough outside hostility to cool Jewish passions for Americanization.⁶⁰ By 1923, a subtle shift began. Rudavsky cited important growth in day school enrollment, which increased to just under 2,200 students by 1923, a number which grew steadily (if not rapidly) each year.

The advent of World War One abruptly stopped the flow of immigrants in 1914, a change of affairs which American legislators made permanent via the restrictive Lodge-Johnson Bill of 1924.⁶¹ The sudden change of affairs, along with the ethnic shift I

⁶⁰ The impact of nativist and racist eugenic movements on the school curriculum must also have influenced Jewish attitudes towards the public school. For more on the link between the eugenic movement and the school curriculum, see Selden (1985, 1988). The extent of Jewish reassessment is evidenced by Rudavsky, who went so far as to disown the melting pot and accuse Americans of calling “for the cultural self-annihilation of ethnic groups in the crucible of American culture” (Rudavsky, 1945, p. 184).

⁶¹ The bill effectively eliminated the possibility of future, large scale Jewish immigration to the United States by creating visa quotas based upon 1890 census figures, even though more up to date figures from the 1910 census were available.

describe above, forced American Jews to reassess their position in America as well as their communal needs. American Jews, who had always looked overseas to Europe for their Rabbis and communal functionaries,⁶² were now faced with the challenge of cultivating a class of leaders at home, from the generation that was born on American soil.⁶³ Some, like Bernard Revel, had earlier made concerted attempts to build cultural bridges in order to bring the “Torah” of Europe to America, where it might grow and influence a rising generation of American Jews.⁶⁴ Rudavsky’s historical writing offered a striking description of Lubavitch Hasidim who had returned home from studying in Poland during the late 1930s. The American students struggled—and succeeded—in bringing their teachers to America on the eve of the Nazi march across Europe. Such efforts by Revel, Lubavitch Hasidim and others to build cultural bridges would have a tremendous impact on the state of Jewish life and education following the Second World War.⁶⁵ Consolidation of American Jewish ethnicity, separation from Europe and the newly felt impetus to create cultural bridges paved the way for a dramatic change in Jewish education.

⁶² Bloomfield (1965) suggested that American Jews turned to Europe for their leaders out of a conviction that American Judaism was not rich or durable enough to last beyond two generations, much less produce communal leaders.

⁶³ Dushkin’s (1918) comments on this issue raise fascinating questions about the early role of America as a Jewish periphery, removed from the culturally rich European center.

⁶⁴ Rakeffet’s (1989) willingness to invoke the notion of “cultural bridging” as a critical role of the day school opens important possibilities for understanding this educational institution. As phrased by Rakeffet and Schiff, collectively, the day school bridged chronological and geographic boundaries by taking cultural norms that were at the same time “old” and “European” and updating them so that they might become “new” and “American” ideals.

⁶⁵ The notion of Jewish education as part of a deliberate move towards cultural bridging is a critical feature of Rauch’s historiography. He suggested that American Jewish “education... was to be redefined in light of what Eastern European Jewry brought over as institutional and ideological models, and their encounter and clash with the American scene. Pragmatic conditions, such as dire poverty, the pressures imposed both by American Jewry, the general American reality, and the public school in particular, would also influence, form, alter and finally determine the future character of American Jewish education” (Rauch, 1973, p. 90). While Rauch suggested that American features of the “bridge” arrangement would ultimately be determinative, his writing does not fully account for the dramatic growth in Jewish day schools that took place in the late 1970s.

The “Great Expansion:” A Complex Revolution

In the 1950s, the Jewish day school movement began a dramatic rise. It would be overly simplistic to claim that prevailing cultural attitudes which dictated against day school enrollment simply shifted. Such attitudes certainly persisted well into the 1950s, as I illustrate below. Instead of a cultural shift, it would be far more accurate to describe the early rise of the post-War day school movement as a response to several competing cultural trends, some which favored day schools and others which opposed. A more refined view suggests the metaphor of a tug of war between two competing teams, in which multiple individuals pull in opposite directions. As individuals from one team weaken, others exert renewed strength. In the case of the Jewish day school, no one “pull” was decisive, instead, a complex array of competing cultural values slowly altered the Jewish community’s notion of its educational needs. The result was less a revolution than a steady coming of age.

By mid-century, the growing day school movement still remained a minority choice, an irrelevance to most American Jews.⁶⁶ While a number of communities succeeded in establishing elementary level institutions, students rarely continued their education through high school (Gartner, 1969). I have already mentioned a trenchant anti-day school polemic within the Jewish community as one factor that frustrated the growth of day schools prior to WWII.⁶⁷ Such cultural ambiguity, if not outright opposition to the day school, continued well after the Second World War (Rudavsky,

⁶⁶ Survey data from Alvin Schiff (1966) showed important increases in enrollment, which climbed from 9,000 to 11,000 between 1944 and 1946. Despite this notable jump, the day school still remained marginal in American Jewish life.

⁶⁷ See Rudavsky (1945) and Ackerman (1975) regarding claims that Jewish day schools were un-American.

1945; Zeldin, 1988).⁶⁸ At the same time, a growing American concern for religious life overlapped with progressive school schemes to create a series of release time programs modeled on the Gary, Indiana plan. This arrangement offered religious instruction on or adjacent to public school property at the close of school hours. The policy response of the Jewish community during these years resulted in even greater determination to preserve secular public education, while the popularity of release arrangements helped contribute to the growth of afternoon supplemental schools for Jewish children (Cohen, 1992).⁶⁹ In addition to release-time politicking that encouraged Jewish support for the public schools, Gartner (1969) credited the initial move into homogenizing suburbs as a reason for lackluster embrace of more particularistic cultural choices. Wertheimer (1999) flatly suggested that secular parents preferred supplemental programs “in order to keep (religion) safely confined to the synagogue...and at a far remove from the home” (p. 12).

As American Jews entered the post-War period, an important set of cultural forces developed which counterbalanced the secularizing and assimilationist trends I noted above. The aftermath of the Shoah altered both Jewish consciousness and demographics. Kasoff (1993) and Schiff (1966) both pointed to a critical change of mindset among American Jews as they slowly came to terms with the destruction of European Jewry during the Nazi Holocaust. The response was complex. On one side, the Shoah created a sense of unease for the post-WWII generation of Jewish adults. The spectacle of Jewish

⁶⁸ Schiff (1966) noted the mainstream Reform movement’s opposition to day schools as a prominent feature of its organizational culture, a stance which softened to a cool acceptance and tentative affirmation by 1964. Wertheimer (1999) also noted some degree of antipathy to the day school among leaders of the Conservative movement as late as the mid-1960s, possibly due to fear that such schools would compete with supplemental Hebrew schools sponsored by Conservative synagogues.

⁶⁹ While the community did unite in opposition to the Christianizing aspects of the release time agenda during the 1940 McCollum case, the community later splintered, with Orthodox groups tending to favor release time programs in the 1950s. Ironically, the success of these programs had a negative impact upon the Orthodox agenda of expanding day school enrollment.

victimization that the Shoah presented was unsettling enough for a generation of Jews who looked for acceptance in the suburbs growing up around major city centers. Even more threatening was the physical presence of Holocaust survivors whose arrival in the United States, some straight from displaced persons camps, shattered the notion of the successful, rising American-Jew who has long moved past the dress and curious accents of his or her immigrant upbringing.

Few stories capture this cultural moment like Phillip Roth's short story, "Eli the Fanatic" (1959/1987). In Roth's story, the Jewish denizen's of a well scrubbed, Protestant suburb outside of New York City react with horror as survivors of the Nazi Shoah arrive in their town and set up a Yeshivah to educate the shattered, orphaned children who come with them. Roth's portrayal of the school's leadership as clumsy, poorly dressed but ideologically passionate about their lot as Jews contrasts with the image of dapper, civically minded Jews who keep their religious identities under wraps and beg the new arrivals to leave, or at least dress "American" so that the stigma of being an outsider might not rub off upon them.

While a very real segment of assimilating suburban Jews sought even greater distance from outward trappings of their Jewish identity in response to the Shoah, another subset of the American Jewish community discovered an urge to self-affirmation and cultural preservation that ultimately supported the agenda of day school education. Kasoff (1993) mentioned a desire to make up for the loss of European centers of Torah study as one of the motivating factors behind the establishment of the Akiva school in Philadelphia during the 1960s. This sense that American Jews bore a unique responsibility to educate their children Jewish in the wake of the Shoah emerged with just

as much force as the desire to retreat from outward signs of Jewish religious or ethnic identity that Roth described in his fiction.

Even as the Jewish community struggled to understand itself and its place in American society more clearly, the Shoah also reshaped the cultural topography of American Jewish life by bringing a large number of extremely pious European Jews to the United States. This small but crucial wave of immigrants defied the prior American Jewish agenda of cultural assimilation and material advancement. They kept their pious head-coverings, modest long garments and Hungarian accents. Both Schiff (1966) and Wertheimer (1999) suggested that the combined post-Shoah immigration of deeply observant Jews and their scholarly leaders succeeded in creating enough demand for Jewish schooling along with a critical mass of qualified teachers to make the creation of new day schools a foregone conclusion. More than just creating a cultural “bridge,” the European “periphery” had now actually relocated to America. As new day schools opened for the immigrant survivors of the Shoah, Americanized Jews began attending, as well. But why? Historians have suggested that religious developments in America, the experience of suburban affluence and concerns about ethnic durability all played important parts in attracting American Jews to the day school.

Multiple historians have pointed to the religious and social climate of American life during the rise of the cold war as a feature that boosted Jewish day school attendance (Cohen, 1992; Hertzberg, 1979; Schiff, 1966). As Americans looked towards the growing Soviet “threat” to the “American way,” a natural cultural response was for Americans to counter-define themselves by strengthening the cultural factors which they imagined as distinguishing them from Russians. Once religious sentiments became

central to this process of cultural self-assertion, the demand for religious education increased. Some Jewish educators eagerly trumpeted the religious character of the Jewish day school as a response to the threat of secular Communist ideology.⁷⁰ Beyond this game of cultural differentiation, Cold war competition with Russia (and the Sputnik launch in particular) spurred Americans to question the quality of their public schools (Kliebard, 1995; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 2002). Jewish day schools, along with all other private schools, benefited from the notion that independent schools were superior to public institutions (Gartner, 1969; Kasoff, 1993; Sarna, 1998; Schiff, 1966). Finally, this period saw the rise of a forceful claim that religion was an essential virtue in the preservation of democracy. Naomi Cohen (1992) documented this trend in American civic life and its argument that:

...a healthy democracy, in contradistinction to totalitarianism, was sustained by religion, which in turn endowed it with divine sanction. The preservation of the American democratic way of life depended, therefore, on the proper recognition and acceptance of religious principles (pp. 119-20).⁷¹

The move to close ranks around perceived common values lent permission to the previously “un-American” institution of private religious schooling.

While the religio-cultural politics of the Cold War period raged, the quieter force of suburban prosperity was having a deeper, more powerful effect on American Jewish attitudes towards the day school. Wilson (1999) describes the flipside of the white,

⁷⁰ The Jewish educator Seymour Fox, in a 1953 address, told his audience that: “By reminding America constantly that there are legitimate ways for man to understand himself and his world other than through the insights of scientific naturalism, the day schools can help to avert the dangers of the kind of intellectual totalitarianism which no democratic society can afford. This is the first and most fundamental contribution of the Hebrew day school to the pattern of American education” (Schiff, 1998, pp. 142-3).

⁷¹ At the height of this period’s cultural frenzy, Dean Luther Weigle of Yale University suggested, in a stunning reversal of established American civic religion, that “schools without religion are sectarian because they had been surrendered to the ‘sectarianism and atheism of irreligion” (Cohen, 1992, p. 120).

Jewish, suburban experience as he and others like Clark (1965) noted a structure of economic, social and even geographic constraints that conspired to keep Americans of color out of the suburbs. This new community, unlike the city, created a new kind of distance between residents of what had previously been mixed communities. Residents of the suburbs suddenly found themselves more isolated if they succeeded in establishing homes in communities that sometimes seemed designed to keep these new residents out.⁷² As a result, they joined a wave of community organizing that overlapped the creation of new suburban synagogues whose function included the maintenance of a Jewish identity in these suburban communities (Moore, 2009). The move from city to suburb was not in and of itself decisive, but became powerful in reshaping Jewish identity once this move to isolated and culturally homogeneous communities overlapped with the growth of wealth among upwardly mobile suburban Jews.

Simply put, as suburban Jews got wealthier, they increasingly sent their children to private schools. Sarna (1998) argued that there is a long standing Jewish association between wealth and non-public schooling, originating in the period when prosperous German Jews created day schools to avoid the forceful Protestant agenda which dominated the public schools. While only a minority of the upwardly-mobile suburban families of this period opted for Jewish day schools, Wertheimer (1999) identified wealth as the most significant correlating factor to day school enrollment for non-Orthodox Jews. Himmelfarb (in Gartner, 1969) spotted this trend as early as the mid-1960s, and claimed that wealthy Jews naturally “traded up” in the goods that they bought as well as the education they provided for their children. Heinz (1990) went so far as to argue that

⁷² Among his proofs, Ebner cites the fact that public transportation was limited so that families lacking the financial means to purchase a car could not even reach some of the new suburbs like Chicago’s North Shore communities (Ebner, 1988).

patterns of high-profile consumption constituted an essential act of cultural initiation for East European Jews who were new arrivals to the suburbs. They might not have been able to change their appearance or their accents, but they asserted their “American” identity by way of consumer culture. “The purchase of homes, new cars...and private education...made them Americans.”⁷³

The Jewish experience of suburban life also held the potential for cultural dislocation. The move from tightly settled Jewish neighborhoods to the suburbs in the 1950s challenged the Jewish community. Suddenly, the thick cultural milieu of shared language and social mores was disrupted as Jews found themselves eager entrants to communities that were dominated by foreign cultural norms. Gans (1958), Schiff (1966) and Waxman (1999) all argued that the spate of school and synagogue building which commenced in the 1950s represented the efforts of Jews to fight off the sense of cultural drift they experienced in suburbia. Kasoff (1993) suggested that two important parental perceptions helped fuel the day school expansion of this period: First, parents felt that they could no longer rely on their neighborhoods to socialize children as Jews. Additionally, parents did not feel competent to adequately educate and enculturate children themselves.

It appears that three forces were operating in tandem: Assimilation, ethnic assertion and the search for cultural synthesis. While I noted the experience of suburban assimilation, above, it would be incorrect to see the issue of assimilation as a contained

⁷³ While it is ironic, if not illogical, to suggest that participation in a Jewish day school might allow socially mobile immigrants to feel more American, several historians suggest that Jews viewed Catholic-Americans as authentic role models. Hence, by imitating suburban Catholics’ loyalty to their parochial schools, the Jews were participating in a model that they believed to be valid for good Americans to follow. See Himmelfarb as referenced in Gartner (1969) as well as Kasoff (1993).

and precisely defined phenomenon. Numerous Jewish historians and sociologists have pointed to patterns of assimilation, by which Jews of all kinds began to lose their ethnic distinctiveness and drop both group-oriented behavior and structural affiliations within the Jewish community.⁷⁴ Such patterns have been a sustained and durable feature of Jewish history.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, the release of the 1990 National Jewish Population Study created an atmosphere of anxiety and crisis by highlighting sharply rising rates of intermarriage and dis-affiliation in Jewish communities across the United States. The clamor of responses that followed pointed to multiple agendas for “solving” the newly discovered “continuity crises.” Agendas aside, the fact that Jewish continuity had entered the communal lexicon served as a critical turning point in the culture of organized Jewish leaders and funders.⁷⁶ The issue of acculturation and assimilation had always existed—but statistical data gathered via the National Jewish Population Study of the late 1990s brought enough attention to this enduring pattern of behavior to force real changes in communal organization and funding.

Oddly, during the same decades that one part of the Jewish community was drifting and assimilating, another part was caught up in a vigorous re-assertion of Jewish identity. One clear motivating factor which spurred Jewish ethnic self-assertion was a growing American Zionist consciousness in the era leading up to and following the

⁷⁴ By 1965, Hertzberg (1979) had already begun to voice alarm over the “growing assurance and security as Jews in American freedom...(They are persuaded)...that they are no longer a minority...In the very midst of freedom this community of ours is beginning to sense a danger. It is in growing fear of its own evaporation” (pp.126-7). See also Gordon (1964), Liebman (1973, 1974, 1988), Liebman and Cohen (1990) and Woocher (1986).

⁷⁵ Meyer (1967) described vigorous attempts on the part of West European Jews to assimilate into cosmopolitan German culture. Also see Mendes-Flohr and Reinartz (1980) for more on this trend.

⁷⁶ Schick and Dauber (1998) declared the publication of the National Jewish Population Study to be a “seminal event” which might convince the mainstream, non-Orthodox Jewish community to “take urgent steps to promote Jewish identity, commitment and continuity” (p. 147). Also see Wertheimer (1999).

founding of the State of Israel in 1948. While the impact of Israeli culture on the mindset of American Jews was certainly cumulative, this wave of cultural transformation clearly crested in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The tumultuous events of the Six Day War in 1967 and Israel's near defeat during the 1973 Yom Kippur War inspired even greater passions among American Jews, who rose to defend "their" country via advocacy and organized philanthropy. The experience changed the nature of American Jewish ethnic identity, and Ackerman (1989), Kasoff (1993) and Schiff (1966) suggest direct correlations between these events and interest in day school education. By the late 1990s, widespread activism on behalf of persecuted Soviet Jews played a similar role in boosting Jewish ethnic confidence and assertiveness (Gurock, 1989).

The rise of American Zionism and Soviet-focused activism did not occur in a vacuum, either. From mid-century on, American Jews had watched (and participated in) the battle for civil rights in their own country. The new African-American assertiveness of the 1960s and early 1970s helped change the terms of citizenship for all ethnic groups in America. The Jews took note, de-emphasizing the universalistic agenda that predominated in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. The new Jewish mindset was increasingly particularistic, more assertive and more committed to defending Jewish interests against non-Jewish society than striving to fit in.⁷⁷

The shift was more than a vague change in American Jewish ethnic identity. The Israel experience fundamentally altered the mindset of American Jews by shifting the

⁷⁷ Schick and Dauber (1998) noted that "in the wake of the Black revolution...the old idea about the melting pot was discredited and replaced by the notion that each group had the right and obligation to fend for itself" (pp. 146-7). On the impact of the Black Pride movement on Jewish identity, see Hertzberg (1992, 1997).

community's attitudes towards Hebrew language as well as reconstructing the notion of piety and religious observance across the spectrum of the Jewish community.

With respect to Hebrew language instruction, the change within the thinking of American Jews towards their educational expectations was profound. At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the level achievement that most Jewish children received was extremely limited. For those who did receive some form of Jewish education, the setting was most likely a heder which offered both unqualified instructors and limited expectations aside from the ability to participate in synagogue services (Dushkin, 1918). Up until this time, the state of Hebrew literacy in American life was so low that the American Jews had little use for the language beyond its role as a sacramental vehicle.⁷⁸ With the rise of a formal Jewish community in Palestine and later the State of Israel itself, American Jews got to witness a society of passionate and ideologically driven Jew dedicated to reviving the Hebrew language. This new moment in history allowed the creation of an educational network which developed new methods of instruction but also allowed new and grander expectations of Jewish literacy than had ever existed during several thousand years of Jewish history.

The notion that Hebrew should not just be accessible but intelligible as well offered entirely new possibilities for Jewish schools that served religiously moderate households. Samson Benderly⁷⁹ and his circle of disciples worked in the mid-twentieth

⁷⁸ One notable example of the generally low level of Hebrew literacy in American life was offered by one of the early prayer books published in the Conservative Movement of Judaism. The editors of this prayer book were troubled by the problematic theology of one prayer which invoked a return to animal sacrifices at the altar of the Temple in Jerusalem, but at the same time were unwilling to simply redact or erase a traditional part of the liturgy. To resolve the problem, the prayer book's editors chose to maintain this prayer in the traditional Hebrew while simply omitting an English translation, on the assumption that most members of the congregation would simply not understand the meaning of the Hebrew text.

⁷⁹ See footnote 55, above, for sources on Benderly's work and educational vision.

century to create a movement of afternoon “supplemental” schools that met several days a week and taught Modern Hebrew with enough passion to create a new generation of textually literate Jews (Scheffler, 1995). To date, this remains the common setting for American children to receive a Jewish education. Unfortunately, Benderly’s vision of a robust supplemental education that offered a high degree of literacy could not endure the forces of acculturation that pushed the Jewish community towards more suburban leisure activities, and the academic quality of these programs has declined precipitously since Benderly’s day (Wertheimer, 1999). While Benderly might have inspired a hunger for Hebrew education by way of his supplemental school programs, those who took his vision seriously later became the advocates of Jewish day schools as this was the only venue which could offer sustained and serious Hebrew language instruction.

In the same way that the growth of the State of Israel reshaped assumptions about Hebrew language study, it also transformed notions of piety and fealty to standards of ritual observance. Emblematic of this shift is the description that Amos Oz (1983) offers of Jerusalem’s Meah She’arim neighborhood. As a child, Oz grew up in that neighborhood among secular and religious Jews. By contrast, this section of the city is dominated by the more extreme elements of black hat Orthodoxy, even to the point that the community placed a number of English placards at the entrance to the neighborhood, warning visitors to dress modestly and conduct themselves in a way that would not detract from the piety that residents have come to expect of their community. It is the same neighborhood in which errant cars and taxis are pelted with stones on Shabbat. Just what happened to allow the cosmopolitan hodge podge of cultures that Oz recalled to shift so greatly?

Over the course of Jewish history, there has always been a notable diversity in the way that Jews have observed the religious laws and practices of their ancestors. Diversity of belief and practice offer the most consistent theme of this history, and notable variations of religious life and practice were just as notable within a single community as they were in comparing one region to another (Seltzer, 1980). This diverse facet of Jewish culture became much more pronounced in western European countries during the early modern years that were the beginning of the European Jewish enlightenment (Meyer, 1967, 1988). While significant pockets of Jewish piety maintained a strong presence, this was not the only voice which governed Jewish culture. There was, instead, a broad cultural pluralism that offered many different modes of belief and practice a claim within a vigorous of sometimes contentious exchange of ideas.

With the founding of the State of Israel, something important shifted. At the risk of oversimplifying a very complex historical process, it will be adequate to note several historical, technological and sociological factors which dramatically impacted the identity of the State's religious population. First, painful memories of the Shoah including the loss of relatives as well as the destruction of important centers of learning inspired a powerful sense of commitment within this community to conserving its past. The experience of living among secular Israelis left this religious community feeling marginalized in a way that made it turn inward. After years of abject poverty, the religious community began to experience improved fortunes and used its wealth to create academies, presses and popular institutions for the dissemination of religious culture. Even the change in technology that made it relatively easy to create large printing runs of sacred books played a role. As academies grew and the community kept up its inward

turn, the ethos of an inwardly focused community that extolled ongoing preoccupation with sacred text to the expense of physical labor became widespread (Soloveitchik, 1994).

As the community became more and more absorbed in its piety, the religious members of Israeli society began to see themselves as not Israeli but rather *Haredi*, those who trembled before God. This sense of *Haredi* identity became widespread, and has made its way into the mainstream of Israeli identity politics to the extent that there are now *Haredi* social organizations, political parties and even public bus lines which the *Haredi* community has compelled to offer gender separate seating, in keeping with the community's sense of modesty. While this community is quite nuanced, three important features of its life are notable for this study. First, the creation of a tightly organized Haredi society within Israel brought an entirely new category of Jewish identity into existence during the latter decades of the twentieth century (Waxman, 1998; Stadler, 2009). Second, the force of this new religious identity became so strong that it began to dominate more moderate branches of traditional Judaism (Rebhun & Waxman, 2004). Finally, the expansive piety of *Haredi* Orthodox Jews in Israel began to filter back to the United States, where it quickly set the tone of discussion for those who accepted or rejected its pious, introspective approach to life. As my field work demonstrated, ripples of this transformation were certainly felt in Woodville, in ways that impacted fundamental aspects of the community, including the culture of CDS, a school which employed many black hat instructors who otherwise referred to themselves with the same *Haredi* moniker of the Israeli community.

The impact of Israeli life on Jewish schooling in America was thus quite significant. Jewish pride over the creation of the State of Israel created vehicles of ethnic identification that supported a move towards day schools. A growing awareness of the centrality of Hebrew language, combined with a decline in the quality of supplemental or after-school Jewish education made the core content of Jewish day schools more desirable to a broad range of American Jews. Finally, the increasing move towards more intense manifestations of religious piety that were exported from Israel to the United States inspired some to delve more deeply into religious life by seeking Jewish education, while others created more religiously moderate or even secular day schools that focused on religious culture as a way of pushing back against a more religious cultural agenda. Either way, the impact of Israeli culture upon American Jews persuaded many of them that Jewish day schools were essential to their growth as both individuals and members of the larger Jewish community.

In response to two tendencies, the desire to fit in to American life and the urge for ethnic self-Assertion, the notion of cultural synthesis took on growing importance in the history of the day school movement. Rauch (1978) suggested that American Jews found themselves caught in a cultural dilemma: They wanted to create authentic modes of Jewish life which simultaneously afforded them access to the culture of the modern world.⁸⁰ Kasoff (1993) argued that the day school could serve exactly this function by creating “a balance between separation and assimilation, of acculturation without total

⁸⁰ Hertzberg (1979) quipped that the essential paradox of American Jewish modernity was the “desire lurking within us to be at one and the same time totally involved in the society and very seriously barricaded against it...the real problem of Alexander Portnoy in Philip Roth’s novel (is this): His mother wants him to look and act like an upper-class Gentile, but come home every Friday night for Shabbat dinner, and do both very successfully” (p. 12).

absorption, of a desire to belong to America without having to betray one's past."⁸¹

Schiff, long a believer that day schools were essentially "American" institutions, offered a forceful (and overtly polemical)⁸² argument that the culturally synthetic stance of Jewish day schools made them critical assets to American education (Schiff, 1966).

Scheffler and Gurock both described important features of what this American-Jewish educational synthesis might look like. Scheffler (1995) painted a dreamy picture of intellectual pluralism in his recollections of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph school:

For me, George Eliot's *Silas Marner* and Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* are forever bound up with the echo of the Hebrew Afternoon prayers and the plaintive chants of Talmudic study. Seated in a corner of the Bais Midrash in the gathering dusk of a midwinter afternoon, poring over Dickens' account of the Terror while the ancient texts and melodies resounded all about, I sensed nothing untoward; all seemed perfectly natural to me. I was painlessly acquiring both worlds, as well as the gulf between them, by juxtaposition (p. 87).

While the intellectual life of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School might have captivated Scheffler's family, other institutions realized the need for making authentic American cultural experience a critical part of their schools. Gurock (1989) detailed Rabbi Joseph Lookstein's efforts to build a day school on the Upper East Side of Manhattan that would

⁸¹ Kasoff (1993) also explicitly contrasted this new "synthesizing" function of the day school to the public school's historical role as an Americanizing agent. The school remained a deliberate cultural agent, but geared towards creating authentic Jewish culture as part and parcel of American identity.

⁸² Schiff's argument for the culturally "catholic" nature of the Jewish day school included a reference to the Netziv (Rabbi Zevi Judah Berlin), a leader of the Volozhiner Yeshivah who was renowned for his penetrating mastery of Talmudic studies. He quoted the Netziv as arguing that "Even if Torah must be taught in combination with secular studies, we should gladly do so, rather than drive away our youth from our midst. It is preferable that secular studies be conducted under religious auspices and in a religious atmosphere than have our youth leave our fold completely" (Schiff, 1966, pp. 32-3). Schiff's use of the quote is shocking for several reasons. First, the Netziv clearly preferred to keep his students in an environment that excluded all non-Jewish influences. Second, the Netziv did not embrace cultural pluralism but rather responded as best he could to what he saw as the forcible imposition of "alien" ideas by trying to mitigate their effects on students. Finally, the Netziv chose to liquidate one of the most important Jewish institutions in Europe, rather than allow secular authorities to impose a Russian language curriculum on the Yeshivah. While the Netziv was many things, including a breathtaking scholar, he was hardly a good model of a culturally accommodating pedagogue.

be culturally distinct from “the ghetto schools” of Brooklyn and Jewish Harlem.

Lookstein’s Ramaz School emphasized its gentility, its economic privilege and, above all things, its deliberately American character. Where other schools like Torah VoDaath or the Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin purposely held classes on Christmas day, Lookstein encouraged his students to join other Americans in getting some well deserved leisure. Where other schools separated genders or ignored girls’ education, Ramaz required its coed student body to attend teas, mixers and annual dances.⁸³ Such experiences were a requisite component of the education and “good breeding” of these socially climbing uptown Orthodox Jews whom Lookstein hoped to send to Harvard and Yale...not just Columbia and City College. Lookstein’s gambit succeeded, creating a high quality model of the Jewish “prep school” that made day school education a viable choice for mainstream, acculturated American Jews. Driven by this spirit, the day school movement made impressive gains from the 1950s and onwards.

While the numbers measuring day school enrollment growth are certainly impressive, the most important development of the Jewish day school in the period between 1945 and today was not numeric, but rather cultural. As I mentioned, above, a complicated set of cultural forces governed day school enrollment. On one side, the pull of suburban prosperity and cultural assimilation sided with deeply seated Jewish commitments to the maintenance of a secular civil society that was tolerant of minorities. Such forces are still persuasive to the majority of Jewish parents who do not send children to day schools. On the other hand, rising Jewish discomfort with assimilation, a

⁸³ Such intimate mixed-gender socializing would have been unthinkable at any of the other Orthodox schools of its day.

Table 1: US Day School Enrollment Figures

| Year | Enrollment | Schools |
|------|------------|---------|
| 1918 | 938 | - |
| 1923 | 2,198 | - |
| 1944 | 7,736 | - |
| 1948 | 18,400 | 127 |
| 1955 | 38,000 | 203 |
| 1964 | 65,400 | 306 |
| - | - | - |
| 1992 | 182,000 | 660 |
| 1999 | 184,000 | 676 |
| 2004 | 205,000 | 759 |
| 2008 | 228,000 | 800 |

(Dushkin 1918, Rudavsky, 1945, Schiff 1966, 1998, Schick 2005, 2009)

Note: Dashes indicate data not available.

shift in American ethnic culture and growing Jewish confidence in its ability to synthesize an authentically Jewish hyphenated identity in America led two distinct groups of believers to embrace the day school.

The current Role of the Jewish Day School

Largely, the “believers” fall into two categories, both seeking cultural preservation, but towards very different ends. Orthodox Jewish “believers” in the day school seized upon the possibility of using Jewish education to effect social change in the early 1950s. Beyond the intellectual component of Jewish life, they wanted to encourage fundamental behavioral changes, such as greater observance of Shabbat and dietary laws, among a population of Jewish parents that was untroubled by extremely lax patterns of

ritual observance.⁸⁴ Israel Scheffler (1995) suggested that American Jewish commitment to patterns of ritual life was so weak that Jewish schools should not count on parents as role models, rather, the school needed to recreate “the very society of which it should be the reflection” (p. 173). In assessing such trends, Wertheimer (1999) declared that the day school had made cultural transmission and the preservation of Jewish distinctiveness its core agenda, in deliberate opposition to the culture of American society.

In addition to its educational role, the Jewish day school maintained social, communal and ideological boundaries for its Orthodox “believers.” This is particularly true in the Modern Orthodox sector, and all the more so among the more conservative Black Hat community where Jewish day school enrollment currently approaches 99% due to a climate which declares day school attendance “obligatory” (Schick, 2005).⁸⁵ The sociological impact of this pattern of segregation exerted a powerful influence on the world view of students, especially those educated in the most right wing Orthodox institutions. Some graduates of these schools increasingly came to eschew contact with the broader culture of American society, which they viewed as hostile or threatening to their values.⁸⁶ Liebman and Cohen (1999) also pointed out the degree to which the

⁸⁴ Himmelfarb, in Gartner (1969), noted that day school education was almost always “more Orthodox” than the home, by which he probably means the day school encouraged children to adopt patterns of ritual behavior that were far more conservative than parental norms (p. 219). Originally some Orthodox educators were not open with parents about their agenda. While Kaminetsky (1970) offered this as a well intentioned campaign to save Jewish Americans from their own ignorance, Bulman (1970) suggested that this was part of a deliberate agenda to displace parental influence over children.

⁸⁵ Wertheimer pointed out the dramatic change between 1960, when the vast majority (around 65%) of Orthodox children left the day school to attend public high schools, and the end of the century, when a mere one percent followed this path. Wertheimer also noted the high percentage of Orthodox affiliated institutions among American day schools. Of 636 Jewish day schools at the time Wertheimer wrote, 500 of them (79%) were Orthodox institutions.

⁸⁶ See Paley (1992) for a description of the assertiveness and increased cultural insularity of Orthodoxy on college campuses. Wertheimer (1999a) described the closed culture of some Orthodox schools in his portrait of Rabbi Yehuda Levin. Levin, a fervent anti-abortion and anti-gay rights activist, described his early experiences by noting, “I had very little contact with the Gentile world. I was living in a ghetto

curricular structure of a Jewish day school might encourage intellectual particularism as opposed to cultural engagement with differing cultures and views.⁸⁷ A number of Jewish intellectuals have expressed alarm in recent years over the impact of both the day school and the Yeshivah in the Orthodox community.⁸⁸ While Orthodox moderates and cultural pluralists have increasingly asserted their vision over the last two decades, there is a concern that fundamentalist⁸⁹ tendencies were becoming pervasive, strengthened and perpetuated by way of the Orthodox Jewish day school, and increasingly some began to speak of a cultural war within Orthodoxy itself.⁹⁰ Despite the troubling nature of these cultural separatist tendencies, one should not lose sight of the fact that the day school has been a vehicle for cultural adaptation within Orthodoxy, not its proximate cause.⁹¹

without walls... It is inbred in our community that what goes on in the outside world is crazy...So if it is crazy, why should we bother with it?" (p. 387).

⁸⁷ Liebman and Cohen (1999) claimed that classical texts like Midrash and Talmud (the latter forms the mainstay of black hat yeshivah day school curriculum) are decidedly ethnocentric and have a tendency to portray non-Jewish culture in a negative light. The combined sociological separation from secular life and intellectual aggrandizement of Jewish norms form a critical "template" (Geertz, 1973) which shapes the culture of Orthodox society.

⁸⁸ Haym Soloveitchik's (1994) "Rupture and Reconstruction" is the classic and most often cited vehicle for this critique. Soloveitchik argued that contemporary Orthodox scholars had led the community towards increasingly strict and self referential patterns of religious life that were inauthentic and unsupported by classic Jewish sources. While Soloveitchik was not the only thinker to raise concerns with the increasingly fundamentalist tendencies of the Orthodox world, his argument was bolstered by his lineage as the descendant of a renowned family of scholars

⁸⁹ Wertheimer (1999a) defined this agenda within the Orthodox community as one which sought clear gender roles, aspired to a religiously oriented civil polity, relied on an imagined past and ideal world view while seeing God's influence behind the course of current events. This orientation included a strong fear of cultural pollution and a concurrent need to fight off real and perceived challenges to core identity.

⁹⁰ Bayme (1999) wrote that "the cultural battles within Orthodoxy are...disturbing. The past forty years have witnessed the ascendancy of ultra-Orthodox groupings and the eclipse of Modern Orthodoxy as the dream of a creative and vital synthesis between Jewish tradition and modern culture. The power of ultra-Orthodoxy is particularly felt in Jewish education circles. Modern Orthodox educators routinely complain that they are forced to hire haredi instructional personnel" (p. 153). Also see Wertheimer (1999) and Schiff (1981).

⁹¹ See Soloveitchik (1994) for a penetrating description of the factors which motivate the contemporary Orthodox crisis of identity. Curiously, one important cause that Soloveitchik described is the sense among many Orthodox individuals that they had compromised or abandoned prior authentic values as they acculturated into American life. Schiff (1966) confirmed this trend, noting the degree to which acculturating suburban Jews deliberately relied upon immigrant and right wing Orthodox Jews to strengthen ethnic loyalties, which they perceived as declining. For a theoretical discussion of efforts to maintain and protect group identity see Douglas (1970), especially her introductory chapter discussing categories of "group" and "grid."

Orthodox “believers” can point to a vigorous educational setting which has injected new energy into Orthodoxy while achieving a breadth and depth of educational attainment in classical Jewish studies that would have been unthinkable immediately following WWII.

There is also a strong (and growing) core of liberal-Jewish⁹² “believers” in the day school, whose motives are strangely similar to their Orthodox peers.

Overwhelmingly, these “believers” turned to the Jewish day school in order to strengthen Jewish “identity,”⁹³ (Goldberg, 1994; Farber & Waxman, 1999; Cohen, 1999) a euphemism that often implies the maintenance of generational continuity by stemming intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews (Rudavsky, 1945; Bayme, 1999; JESNA, 1999). In this capacity, the day school appears to be an extraordinarily effective institution.⁹⁴ Rimor and Katz (1993), in reporting a post hoc analysis of results from the 1990 National Jewish Population Study, proclaimed that “Jewish day schools are the best vehicle for implementing Jewish involvement and are the only type of Jewish education

⁹² By “liberal-Jewish” I mean those who either affiliate with one of the denominations that affords a high level of importance to the role of human agency in shaping religious tradition or those who ground their expressions of Jewish identity outside of the theological arena.

⁹³ The notion of “Jewish identity” is by far one of the most problematic terms in Jewish educational research today. It often covers the deeper agenda of maintaining sociological networks of Jews who live in tight settlement catchments and participate in Jewish organizational life, without revealing why Jews chose such patterns, what they are supposed to know or believe as part of living such life patterns. Hyman (2005) argued that the entire construct of Jewish identity has been obscured by social science methodology that is statistical, rather than anthropological, and calls for both greater flexibility in understanding Jewish identities, as well as greater methodological creativity in exploring how Jewish identity is constructed and expressed as a lived human experience.

⁹⁴ Wertheimer (1999) cited an advertisement from Torah U’Mesorah, an Orthodox Jewish day school organization, promoting the Jewish day school to liberal-Jewish families. The ad proudly proclaimed that “the intermarriage rate drops (from its average of 50%) to 7% for students who complete a Jewish day school education” (p. 5). Numerous studies have examined the impact of Jewish education on the adult choices of students. See studies by Cohen (1974), Shahar (1998), Shapiro (1988), Sigal, August and Beltemp (1981) and Ribner (1977). Himmellarb (1977) suggested that the impacts of Jewish education upon choices about lifestyle and ritual observance exhibited a “tiered” progression, such that Jewish education made little long term impact until a child had experienced six thousand hours of Jewish schooling. The next “tier” of significant correlation began at ten thousand hours of exposure.

that stands against the very rapidly growing rate of intermarriage.”⁹⁵ Statistics aside, this type of claim is very appealing to suburban parents who find themselves distanced from tradition and wish to provide a stronger Jewish education for children than the one they received. Increasingly, through a “trickle-up effect” and deliberate co-curricular family programming, the day school has become one of the few institutions to which liberal-Jews can turn in order to strengthen their own Jewish knowledge base.⁹⁶ Tobin (1998) expressed the attraction for liberal Jews concisely when he noted that Jewish day schools “...are essential to the Jewish future. The sort of comprehensive Jewish education that these schools provide is the best—and perhaps the only—real antidote to the ignorance and apathy that afflicts contemporary American Jewry” (pp. 176-7). For Wertheimer (2002), this implies that the Jewish day school was not just a vehicle for teaching and enculturation, rather, he suggested that it had become an important forum for working out and refining a conflicted, modern Jewish identity.

⁹⁵ See Avi Chai, (1993) for their explanation of detailed statistical correlations in the 1990 NJPS census. Another key finding of the Avi Chai study is that there appear to be critical threshold levels of educational exposure which correlate to certain “markers” of Jewish identity. Also see Ackerman (1989) and Schiff (1994, 1994a, 1994b, 1998). There are numerous difficulties with such claims. I noted Hyman’s cultural and methodological objections in footnote 93, above. In addition, note Ackerman’s (1989) strong critique of identity-directed schooling efforts. In particular, Ackerman claimed that day school leaders had not adequately demonstrated that Jewish day schools offered any guarantee of acquiring fundamental Jewish literacy skills. Schiff (1987) offered a similar critique of the quality of Jewish studies curricula in many day schools. Goldberg (1981) voiced the most trenchant criticism of the American Jewish day school, arguing that its most committed graduates often lacked basic skills in Hebrew grammar of Jewish textual knowledge.

⁹⁶ Applebome (1997), Archer (1998) and Bein (1999) reported on the growth of Jewish day schools nationally, especially among liberal Jews who sought more serious Jewish education for their children than they had received growing up. On the mixed record of synagogues’ ability to fill this parental need, see Aron, Lee and Rossel (1995) and Schwarz (2000). Regarding similar trends in British day school enrollment, see Arkin (2001).

Community Day Schools for a Post-Denominational Judaism

The rising popularity of the Jewish day school beyond the boundaries of the Orthodox community⁹⁷ has had a major impact on the demographics of the American day school movement over the last two decades. The Conservative Movement was the first liberal denomination to build a vigorous national network of Jewish day schools starting in 1964. The Reform movement followed nearly three decades later, by creating a much smaller coalition of Reform affiliated schools.⁹⁸ Recently, the most striking trend within Jewish day school education has been the creation of “community day schools” that seek to educate children in a Jewish atmosphere that either de-emphasizes denominational differences, or deliberately invite the active assertion and discussion of ideological differences. In an age of deep and increasingly bitter divisiveness between the modern Jewish movements,⁹⁹ the community day school offers a rare opportunity for Jews who affirm different belief systems to encounter one another (Powell, 2005). Such community or pluralistic day schools now outnumber Reform and Conservative institutions, and recent surveys showed the highest enrollment increases (17%) across all categories of schools in this sector (Schick, 2005, 2009). While the overwhelming majority of students in community day schools come from non-Orthodox Jewish

⁹⁷ As of 2005 approximately 80% of American day school students were enrolled in Orthodox institutions (Schick, 2005).

⁹⁸ In 2004, 19 Reform affiliated schools and 57 Conservative affiliated Schechter schools operated in the United States (Schick, 2005). Over nearly half a decade these figures contracted slightly and in 2009 there were 17 schools identified as Reform and 50 identified as Conservative (Schick, 2009).

⁹⁹ The last several decades have been punctuated by a high degree of invective and caustic dialogue between Jews. For some indication of the hostility that some liberal Jews directed towards the Orthodox, see Freedman (2000) and Rosenblatt (1988). There have been numerous Orthodox provocateurs, as well. Note Alan Yuter’s (1989) article questioning whether “Reform Judaism (is) a movement, a sect or a heresy?”. Norman Lamm, then the president of Yeshiva University (a bastion of mainstream Orthodoxy) spoke in 1998 before the “O.U.,” the largest Orthodox association in the United States, declaring that even “‘nothing’--that is, complete secularism and assimilation-- is better than Reform and Conservative affiliation.” See: [http://www.yu.edu/lamm/O-U-2\(98\)-press.html](http://www.yu.edu/lamm/O-U-2(98)-press.html) accessed on 7/25/2005.

households (Kasoff, 1993), anecdotal evidence shows some progressive and centrist Orthodox parents enrolling children in community day schools to avoid the rightward drift of their community's Orthodox affiliated institutions.¹⁰⁰ As such ideological diversity within the Jewish day school grows, it will continue to pose serious challenges, especially at the level of the school's curriculum.¹⁰¹ While it represents an exciting development within Jewish education, the growth of the community day school also reveals an important emerging trend in Jewish life.

Increasingly, Jews in the "post-denominational" age of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century are becoming less loyal to any single "label" of Jewish denominational life.¹⁰² Earlier, Avi Chai (1993) reported a shift in patterns of identification such that "more Jews consider themselves as belonging to an ethnic group than to a religion" (p. 1). This is an important development, since religion is bounded and group focused, while ethnicity is often local and self-generated (Takaki, 1993). Putnam's (2000) work reflected an important trend towards "privatized religion" across the American landscape. Within the Jewish community, Cohen and Eisen's (2000) ethnographic research shows that contemporary American Jews increasingly subscribe to

¹⁰⁰ For example, Rubin (2003) noted the creation of a new community school in Providence, RI, for exactly this reason.

¹⁰¹ Ingall's (1993) findings from one school indicated that, when challenged by a diverse parent body, the institution often responded by "keep(ing) its message vague," downplaying transcendent or religious aspects of the school's character.

¹⁰² While the National Jewish Population Study of 2000-1 (2003) reported that 4% of Jews declined to identify themselves as any single denomination, a small survey of young Jewish leaders (Selis, 2003) indicated that almost 35% of the sample claimed that no "one movement or denomination within Judaism" adequately describe their religious identity. Also note Cohen (2005) as well as Greenberg and Wertheimer (2005). Lipman (2004) reported that this pattern of disinterest in denominational life was particularly noticeable among young, urban Jews of "generation X." Ginsberg (2004) also reported the founding of a non-denominational rabbinic seminary in Boston, the second of its kind in the United States. Oddly, it appears that the non-denominational community has grown enough to require its own institutions and infrastructure (Green, 2005).

the religion of the “sovereign self.”¹⁰³ Rather than accept externally imposed categories of experience or self-definition, modern Jews increasingly pick and choose from Jewish tradition while simultaneously borrowing from other cultures and spiritual disciplines in order to synthesize their own unique expressions of Jewish personhood.¹⁰⁴ For these “modern” and “sovereign” Jewish iconoclasts, the community day school is increasingly a popular choice.¹⁰⁵

Implications for this Work

A review of the historical literature of Jewish education in America points to several factors which offer a critical foundation for this study of the culture within one Jewish day school. First, it reveals the role that schooling has played in the process of working out an American Jewish identity. The dynamics of assimilation, identity assertion and cultural self-preservation are persistent throughout. Second, it reveals important boundaries within the Jewish community, largely drawn along the axis of greater or lesser ritual observance as well as greater or lesser cultural homogeneity. The trend towards Orthodox cultural separatism from American life is particularly important,

¹⁰³ Liebman (1999) described the move from a “ritual” to “ceremonial” mindset as an example of how the reconstruction of modern Jewish identity was expressed in contemporary life. He cited the practice of *Havdallah* (separation from Shabbat), a traditional ritual which is performed at the close of Shabbat. Instead of a religious “ritual” (that defines the individual in relationship to God), Liebman increasingly saw Havdallah treated as a “ceremony” (that reaffirmed the security of the household and the ties between parent and child).

¹⁰⁴ While some applauded the creativity unleashed by this new development in American Judaism (Schwarz, 2000), others were critical. Israel (2002) sharply attacked those who disavowed the boundaries of “doctrinal or group conformity” on the grounds that “such identity is, by definition, incoherent, based mainly on contingent individual values (or whims) such as autonomy and self-fulfillment” (p. 249).

¹⁰⁵ Rubin (2003), reported the comments of Leslie Gutterman, the rabbi at Temple Beth-El, the largest Reform synagogue in Rhode Island, who supported his community’s new, pluralistic day school by offering the following rationale. “As our community continues to shrink and age, which is what the National Jewish Population Survey suggests, I think the more important choice in the future will not be between denominations as much as the choice of whether or not to be a serious Jew, and there’s no more serious Jewish education than can be found in a day school,” he said. “I think it would be a good thing if young people from all denominations can be brought together to know one another, to learn together and study together.”

along with a pattern of increasing conflicted relations between various Jewish groups. Finally, it is important to note the normalization of the role of the Jewish day school among a privileged and acculturated American Jewish mainstream. The community day school, with its agenda of avoiding partisan ideological and cultural dividing lines, occupies a particularly important position in the development of this recent trend. The novelty of this phenomenon certainly suggests a need for additional study of such institutions.

The Study of Culture in Schooling

One of the first researchers to pay serious attention to the study of culture in schools was George Spindler. Spindler (1963, 1982, 2000) gave special emphasis to the question of how culture impacted the process of education. He frequently argued that this discipline was an important “foundation” area of knowledge for pre-service teachers, and even suggested that the ethnographic study of schooling could advance a process of “cultural therapy” by exploring models of conflict and interaction in schools (Spindler, 2000). In other work, Spindler gave close attention to issues of social class and how these might advance or impede the educational process (Spindler, 2000). Spindler’s broad ranging work in the ethnographic study of education created a durable linkage of disciplines which continued in the work of later scholars.

Notable successors in this academic vein include Lois Weis, who brought a strong voice of progressive cultural criticism to her work around the intersections of class, ethnicity and schooling (See Weiss, 1988, 1990; Weiss & Fine, 1993, 1997). Varenne’s work spans a broad range including cultural study (1978, 1981, 1982; Varenne & Ruskin, 1983), race and class issues (Varenne, 1978a; Varenne & McDermott, 1996) as well as

the intersection between discourse and pedagogy (Varenne, 1978a, 1987, 2006; Varenne & Hill, 1982; Varenne & Mullooly, 2006). Heath's (1983) study of life and schooling in the Piedmont region and Delpit's (1988) work on the language of privilege and its relationship to power in the teaching relationship both demonstrate the durable legacy of cultural studies as a tool for understanding schools.

While the scholars that I mention, above, set an important context for this study, the work of two individuals might well be deemed essential as precursors to this study. In the realm of cultural studies, Harry Wolcott (1973, 1977, 1982, 2002, 2003) effectively explored issues of institutional life, group identity, rule breaking and power. Wolcott's (1973) study of the "man in the principal's office" is particularly important, as it offered clarity of method and set high standards for quality of field work. The thoughtful character of Wolcott's work underscored the importance of the study of culture in schooling and invited other researchers to enter the field.¹⁰⁶ Alan Peshkin also made a significant contribution to the field through his study of race, privilege and community identity within schools (Peshkin, 1982, 1986, 1991, 2001). Peshkin's (1986) study of one fundamentalist Christian school stands head and shoulders above any other piece of research. While others have given varying degrees of attention to this particular phenomenon,¹⁰⁷ Peshkin showed considerable prowess in his ability to develop the insights of a member of this otherwise closed religious community. Peshkin's diligence and his ability to wed a deep respect for his host school with unflinching honesty about the life of that institution set his work as an ideal model for research.

¹⁰⁶ For example, Lighfoot's (1983) work on the culture of high schools.

¹⁰⁷ See Archer (1999), Carper and Layman (1997) and Seiferth (1985).

Cultural Studies of Jewish Day School Education

I have already noted the degree to which historical work on the Jewish day school begs the question of culture as well as the existence of a vigorous field of discourse related to the more general study of culture in schooling. This final section of my review of existing literature returns the focus of this study to the range of existing work which explores the culture of contemporary Jewish experience in general, Jewish schooling in particular and finally the state of research on the culture of the Jewish Day School.

Cultural Studies of the American Jewish Experience

In the realm of cultural studies, a number of important projects have helped to paint the contours of American Jewish experience. Gans' 1958 work was an early attempt to describe the cultural transformation of American Jewry in a new suburban setting. Others have explored the world of Jewish elderly (Myerhoff, 1978) or the experience of religious leaders (Fried, 2002; Wilkes, 1994). A few powerful studies describe the world of Lubavitch Hasidim, an influential charismatic sect within Orthodox Jewry (L. Harris, 1995; Levine, 2003). Many of these works offer a popular, non-scholarly approach to one facet of American Jewish experience. In counter-distinction, Heilman (2000) and Kugelmass (1988) bring a more theoretically grounded research stance to their work.

While nearly a decade since publication, Cohen and Eisen's (2000) groundbreaking study still represents one of the most important new studies of the culture of American Jews. Cohen and Eisen developed a rigorous qualitative methodology by way of their extensive field work including an expansive number of interviews with

Jewish individuals across the United States. Their conclusions suggest that the cutting edge of Jewish experience is boldly iconoclastic and unashamedly idiosyncratic. While the realm of the “sovereign self” that Cohen and Eisen identify has certainly caught the attention of other researchers,¹⁰⁸ considerable work is still needed to explore questions of culture and identity, especially within the institutional space that this dissertation explores.

General Studies of Jewish Education

I noted at length, above, the historical study of Jewish education by researchers who included the Jewish day school as part of their work (Ackerman, 1975; Dushkin, 1918; Kasoff, 1993; Rauch, 1978; Rudavsky, 1945; Sarna 1998; Schiff 1966; Wertheimer, 1999). A steady body of research, notably Schick’s (2000, 2005, 2009) work, explored the demographic aspects of day school growth, with others have adopted a highly quantitative approach to the question of the day school’s impact on patterns of Jewish behavior (Schiff, 1994, 1994a, 1994b; Schiff & Schneider, 1993). Such broad survey work of necessity excludes the possibility for studying the culture of the day school by pre-supposing an input-output model that the researchers seek to test and validate.

Several researchers in the humanistic disciplines have maintained a healthy scholarly dialogue regarding the philosophy of day school education (Fox, Scheffler and Marom, 2003; Lewitter, 1981) and the role of institutional vision in the day school

¹⁰⁸ Note Farber and Waxman, (1999). They described that notion that, given the breakdown of traditionally authoritative structures such as science and religion, individuals increasingly turned to self-constructed notions of “what feels right” as a new source for orienting values. The metaphor for contemporary Jewish identity had become the “salad bar” (p. 400) from which individuals might casually pick and choose ingredients.

(Pekarsky, 2006). In particular, the classic study of curriculum is quite vigorous, including the study of language acquisition (Grant & Robbins, 2001), the arts (Backenroth, 2004), curricular integration (Malkus, 2001; Pomson, 2001), moral education (Ingall, 1993, 1998; Levingston, 2002), benchmarks for attainment in Jewish studies (Goldberg, 1981) and the growing question of subject specific pedagogical knowledge (Sinclair, 2004). Outside the humanities, a number of important studies have explored school administration, most notably Kurshan's case study of lay leadership in the Jewish day school (1996).

Jewish Day Schools

In the realm of Jewish schooling, a small number of studies offer guidance for research on culture in the Jewish day school. Himmelfarb (1977, 1980) represents the first of these studies. While the studies are helpful from a methodological standpoint, they are too broad to answer the specific questions of cultural accommodation that I pose. Schoem's (1989) study of a Jewish supplemental school also offers methodological guidance, despite the considerable differences between his host institution and the one I proposed to study.

Prior to the start of field work, the most helpful extant research on cultural pluralism in the Jewish day school existed in the form of three unpublished dissertations and one new book. Gans (1986) examined conflicts between parents and educators regarding the goals of day school education, while Samuels (1992) explored the way in which Israeli teachers managed cultural differences between themselves, their students, parents and other non-Israeli teachers. The closest work to my own was done by Bullivant (1975) as a study of enculturation and dissonance among students in an

Australian, Hasidic day school. Like Peshkin's work, Bullivant's study emerged from a culturally homogeneous environment that attempted to limit diversity. While similar cultural tropes regarding religious definition abound, the dynamics of negotiated community that my study explores differ fundamentally from Bullivant's focus on the establishment and defense of religious normativity.

The most recent work available includes an in depth study of the connection between parents and their experiences as adult participants in an emerging Canadian school (Pomson & Schnoor, 2008). While Pomson and Schnoor's work does not offer the compelling character of Peshkin's quest of a religious and cultural outsider attempting to explore a foreign milieu, this recent work set a high methodological benchmark by virtue of the project's reliance on a generous number of structured interviews conducted by a team of funded researchers, extended field work on-site and a comprehensive review of documentary evidence. While this dissertation borrows generously from Pomson and Schnoor's well polished lenses, it intends to focus those lenses upon a very different set of questions within the Jewish day school.

Two new pieces of research by Hyman (2008) and Kay (2009) explored issues of culture and identity as reflected in the lives of pluralistic Jewish day schools. Hyman's work is notable for expanding notions of identity formation, specifically the development of dissonant or complex identity within Jewish children and teens. Kay developed a working theory that attempted to apply more general notions of pluralism to Jewish schools. Kay and Hyman's studies suggest an expanding interest in the study of pluralistic Jewish institutions, a field that this study seeks to enrich by providing deeply

grounded ethnographic data around the question of how actors in pluralistic schools construct notions of community within those institutions.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

The current literature offers several cultural studies of the Jewish American experience, including some valuable research on the culture of Jewish day schools. While this previous work has provided helpful guidance for the current study, the present scholarly literature remains extremely limited. Despite the important contributions noted above, there are still far more lacunae than there is solid research. Ackerman (1989) offered a litany of areas that required further study over fifteen years ago, identifying the study of school culture as a notable missing element in the academic literature. With precious few exceptions, the need for more study of culture within Jewish education persists.¹¹⁰ This project is intended to fill the gap by examining the process of community formation and cultural accommodation in a heterodox Jewish day school.

In the general educational literature, Peshkin's (1986) work set a high standard for research on religious educational institutions. Peshkin was particularly adept at capturing and describing culturally homogenizing forces and instances of student resistance in the fundamentalist Christian school he examined. Peshkin's study offered a critical starting place as well as a successful model of field work and writing which this study sought to emulate, while mindful of two important caveats. First, the content of Peshkin's host school obviously differed from that of a Jewish day school. Second, this project assumed

¹⁰⁹ I return to Hyman (2008) and Kay's (2009) work in greater detail in Chapter Five.

¹¹⁰ The degree to which this is so was brought clearly to my attention in a conversation with Carol Ingall, a faculty member at the Jewish Theological Seminary and one of the premier writers in the field of morals and ethics in Jewish education (conversation from March 7, 2005). To Quote Dr. Ingall, "the field is wide open. No one even began studying Jewish day schools until 15 years ago."

a far different tone from Peshkin's project by virtue of the fact that its author actively adopted an insider stance at CDS, as opposed to the role of outside observer which Peshkin maintained throughout his study. Following Peshkin, Pomson and Schnoor (2008) delivered a well-orchestrated study which successfully delved into the life of one Jewish day school by gathering a range of interview data and immediate first-hand impressions of parent experience. If Peshkin offered this researcher the inspiration to cross cultural lines in order to tell a compelling story, then Pomson and Schnoor presented a reminder of how many stories remain to be told. From my perspective as both researcher and field-worker, it was readily apparent that CDS offered a unique story, one that other scholars had missed, and one which was worthy of further exploration.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The Case for Ethnography

In this chapter, I will address the most critical methodological issues which stand at the heart of this study. Having defined the context of my study in Chapter One and demonstrated both the importance and need for this work in Chapter Two, I now turn towards a detailed argument for how such a study might be conducted. I suggest that the well regarded tradition of ethnographic field work represents a superior methodological model of data acquisition for this study, and will offer a detailed protocol for conducting such research *in situ* and managing data upon exit from the field. Given the variety of approaches to the analysis of field data, I will suggest both a practical vehicle for working with data as well as a discrete interpretive schema for data analysis. I close with an acknowledgement of the limits of this study and cautions regarding the treatment of its conclusions.

The Challenge of Method

Lee Shulman (1988) suggests that educational researchers ought to begin their work by asking which methods can be deployed most effectively to meet the question at hand. In the case of this study of school culture, I seek a method that will allow me to gather research data as a living participant in the school. The method must be able to capture a large amount of complex and fairly nuanced interaction between members of the school. It must be sensitive to messages that are spoken as well as silent, including such simple but rich details as facial expression, choice of clothing and who certain students smile at in the hallways—or whom they avoid. All of these fast moving,

seemingly inscrutable wisps of activity come together to collectively express what the “culture” of the school might be at any given point in time.¹¹¹

Further, an effective method for this project would allow observed data to be double checked against corroborating data from multiple participants. Ideally, the researcher would have an opportunity to ask the subjects of observation what they thought, believed or otherwise intended by their actions. Along with the observed activity of individuals, it will be just as important to seek information from the official written record that the school creates by way of its announcements, staff memos, public email messages and formal publications. These data, once captured, should come into dialogue in order to examine correspondence and contradiction. Given the many challenges that this project and the parameters of the research site pose, ethnography suggests itself as the most suitable method to meet all of these challenges.

Ethnography and the Study of Culture

Ethnography is classically understood as a branch of anthropology which draws upon the direct interaction with or observation of living cultures in order to decipher the meaning of symbols, structures and social hierarchies (Barnard, 2000). The field divides between different schools of analysis. Lévi-Strauss (1963) attempted to map an abstract structure of social interactions while Geertz argued for the existence of social templates that are best revealed by a close reading or “thick description” of immediately observed actions and cultural habits (Geertz, 1973). Despite any theoretical differences between these lead theoreticians of the field, ethnography as a discipline uniformly calls upon

¹¹¹ For another example of research which seeks to isolate a pervasive but simultaneously inscrutable aspect of school culture, see Lightfoot (1983), particularly p. 23.

practitioners to spend extended time in the field, developing close connections with a cultural group as well as a detailed knowledge of the group's habits and cultural practices. The various goals of this ethnographic work include the quest to discover universal dynamics of human behavior as well as an interest in celebrating the cultural practices that make various societies unique and distinctive.

While ethnographic approaches to the study of culture have shed light upon a broad range of exotic societies, this method has become the established vehicle to study culture in schools. Since the early work of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown at the start of the twentieth century, the discipline of anthropological observation and analysis has sought to derive meaning from the varied tapestry of human cultural experience (Barnard, 2000; Malinowski, 1922; Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). Margaret Mead's (1949/1928) groundbreaking research created a turning point in American anthropology by suggesting that extended, in depth field work offered a superior way of gaining first hand access to the cultural world of informant communities.¹¹² Clifford Geertz embraced a similar turn to the particularity of lived experience in his call for the rendering of culture by way of "thick description." Geertz's commitment to "seek complexity and order it" (Geertz, 1973, p. 34)¹¹³ in his research made participatory ethnographic observation one of the most valuable scholarly tools for exploring world cultures.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Other classic ethnographic work includes Hurston (1935), Whyte (1933/1943), Evans-Pritchard (1940), Turner (1967, 1969, 1982) and Weiner (1987). Almost uniformly, this literature offers an experience of cultural travel that penetrates previously unknown landscapes for its readers.

¹¹³ Geertz's language was meaningful, as he asked the investigator to maintain the complexity of particulars that would otherwise be erased on a Levi-Straussian structuralist theory. For Geertz, this maintenance of particulars in the act of response to his observations was crucial. It is grounded in the epistemological notion that one could only learn about the his subject by delving into the particulars of culture. Geertz wrote that, in opposition to the rationalism and reductionism of eighteenth century views of man as the being, "that appeared when he took his cultural costumes off, the anthropology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries substituted the image of man as the transfigured animal that appeared when he

The tradition of ethnographic research remains rich and continues to be renewed by important work. Ground-breaking contemporary ethnography includes Spradley's (1970) study of urban culture, Willis' (1977) pioneering work on social class identity among British youth, Ogbu and Simons' (1998) argument about the nature of voluntary versus involuntary immigrant minority identity and Venkatesh's (2008) edgy foray into the world of urban gang culture.

I have already noted the paradigm-casting work of Spindler, Wolcott and Peshkin in Chapter Two of this dissertation, in the context of studies on schooling and culture.¹¹⁵ What I did not address in that chapter was the coherence of method among these leaders in the study of culture in schooling. To a person, they also represent a strong argument for the tradition of ethnographic field work as critical tool in their efforts to understand the culture of schools. While this does not fully respond to Shulman's charge regarding the use of method, so far I have argued that ethnographic study of education is a rich and permanent feature of the scholarly literature, particularly where researchers turn their attention to school culture. Still, there are a variety of scholarly approaches to the study of culture, including case study and even quantitative statistical analysis.¹¹⁶ As I continue, I will argue in detail that ethnography is not only well suited to the study of

put them on." Geertz, 1973,38. In short, Geertz contended that without the load of particular culture and behavior, there was no *person* to be known at all.

¹¹⁴ Geertz's method represented a bold new path in the tradition of cultural anthropology. Geertz asserted this point clearly in his response to Levi-Strauss's works, *Tristes Tropiques* and *La Pensee Sauvage*. He seemed to mock Levi-Strauss by accusing the French structuralist of desiring "intellectual closeness and physical distance from his subjects" (Geertz, 1973, p. 356). Clearly, Geertz would not accept an epistemological method which demanded, like Lévi-Straus, that one must first "repudiate experience" in order to reach structural truths (Geertz, 1973, p. 356).

¹¹⁵ See above, pp. 75-76.

¹¹⁶ Note, for example, Kurshan's (1996) case study exploring the culture of leadership within one Jewish day school.

culture, but that it is a singularly effective methodological vehicle given the nature of my research question and the setting for field work.

Congruence of Method, Question and Research Setting

A critical rationale for electing an ethnographic approach derives from the nature of the question I pose as well as the setting in which I seek answers. I claim, above, that culture is a fast moving target—as ubiquitous as it is ephemeral. Culture does not happen in any one space; rather, it grows out of the sum total of a large and complex number of interactions which suffuse a place. To understand the culture of one particular school, I elected to make myself part of the system that I would be studying so that I might have full access to a broad flow of experiences. Only once I became such a participant in the life of the school did I begin to grasp some of its dynamics. Indeed, it was only after I declared my status as an insider that leaders and teachers would even agree to speak with me. The necessity of choosing this research stance overwhelmingly dictated some of the methodological and structural features, tactical considerations as well as a final interpretive reason for “deploying” an ethnographic research strategy. I argue that my choice of this research stance was as much expedient as it was grounded in proper methodology of ethnographic field work, and that both the character of my research question as well as the nature of the evidence at hand strongly dictated an ethnographic research stance.

First, an ideal method for exploring the process by which students and faculty negotiate their participation in the life of CDS would necessarily draw from a large and structurally variegated pool of potential data. I note the following rich sources of data at CDS: Faculty talk with students; intra-faculty conversation; classroom dialogue; student-

created videos which spoof school culture; staff memos; public email messages sent to faculty; school assemblies; rhetoric surrounding athletics; student and faculty choices of dress; patterns of participation in ritual activities; gender patterning and grouping in various activities; language codes and the use of “in-group language;” body language (particularly body distance, intimacy and boundaries); markers of wealth; shifting configurations of the school’s block schedule... While none of these sources could stand alone as evidence for the state of school culture, collectively, this body of data has the ability to complement and add texture to the primary sites of observation that I will detail further, below.

Maxwell (1996) suggests that the variety of data sources in this environment largely rules out a quantitative or survey-based approach to the study of culture.¹¹⁷ By contrast, scholars like Wolcott (1973) and Lightfoot (1983) have created masterful ethnographic studies of school culture that draw data from almost every piece of paper and lived interaction that they came across as researchers.¹¹⁸ Their work highlights the essential congruity of ethnography with culture study in a context where many complex and heterogeneous sources of data are the natural resources at hand. While it might be argued that this broad reliance on divergent sources works against good research method, I contend that interpretive rather than structural features offer the key organizing framework which guarantees the coherence of this project. I side heavily with Geertz,

¹¹⁷ It is worth noting the existence of a range of quantitative tools to evaluate culture. A number of such instruments that provide measures of school climate and culture are listed by Bishop and Lester (1993). Such an approach was not feasible for this study due to the fact that these instruments usually measure staff professional culture, not the state of participation in or creation of shared culture between faculty and students.

¹¹⁸ In their research in Jewish day schools, Kurshan (1996) and Levingston (2002) also made broad use of an impressive array of evidence that lacks any structural common denominator.

who long argued that the most important job of an ethnographic researcher was the challenge of “descend(ing) into detail” (Geertz, 1973, p. 58).

The second structural argument for ethnographic method emerges from the critical need to position myself as a participant in the life of CDS in order to gain access to the most finely nuanced data about the life of the school. In some ways, this is a simple corollary to the claim of data-diversity that I advance above. There was simply so much going on at CDS at any given time that it would have been impossible to effectively penetrate the culture of the school without living and working inside its institutional culture. In starker terms, the larger process of negotiating access to CDS evolved in such a way that I was only offered entrée to the school once I had agreed to join the school as a participant, not just an observer. As such, my role during the period of field work was that of a ninth grade teacher and coordinator of professional development. These two roles were fortuitous, placing me at the center of activity among senior administrators and instructional faculty. Absent such a role, I would never have gained access to some of the most important conversations that have shaped my thinking about the whole question of what constitutes viable data for patterns of culture. Even before negotiating access to CDS, I took a clear stance as a follower of Wolcott, who argues that the status of insider and participant is beneficial, perhaps even essential, to the endeavor of good ethnographic research (Wolcott, 1973; 1977, 1999, 2003). While my participant status admittedly raises questions of research validity which I will address, below, I again return to Shulman’s charge that the scholarly investigator must adapt his or her method to the exigencies of their research setting. In this case, the role of ethnographic researcher offered the most coherent and defensible vehicle for

investigating institutional culture while simultaneously serving as part of the faculty of CDS.

The methodological and structural points that I note above (diversity of data and the need for accessing CDS as a participant) offer a powerful synergy. An important share of the evidence that I encountered as an insider at CDS consisted of those activities that a researcher, by definition, cannot photocopy, record or easily transcribe. Winks, nods and looks of exasperation during prayers all fall into a category that Maxwell (1996) describes as “rich data”¹¹⁹ (p. 125). The common feature of this data is that it relies upon the investigator to record it by journaling, sketching and otherwise reflecting on the landscape in which he finds himself present. As such, the researcher himself or herself becomes the primary vehicle for capturing—some might argue even creating this data—by serving as a recording instrument (Shank, 2002). Geertz and Wolcott both argued that ethnographic research strategies were effective in cases where the investigator participate in the system he or she studies, and that this stance allows for solid and critical analytic work following field observation.¹²⁰

In addition to arguments along “methodological” and “structural” lines a third “tactical” reason strengthens the case for employing ethnography. As an observer, it is easy to fall into the trap of creating a data set out of one’s own biases, preconceptions and

¹¹⁹ Geertz (1973) offers a classic treatment of this category in his discussion of the meaning of “winks and nods” (pp. 6-7).

¹²⁰ Geertz (1973) declared that after one has recorded all of this data, the real ethnographic moment takes place when the researcher moves towards “a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures in terms of which (these motions) are produced, perceived and interpreted.” Similarly, Wolcott (1999) defended participant observation as the starting place for ethnographic analysis that followed along clear and agreed lines of scholarship.

limitations.¹²¹ As such, my research design made expansive use of ethnographic interviews with faculty and, where applicable, parents. I often had occasion to observe classroom interactions as part of my professional work at CDS in which teacher behavior struck me as notable. Often, the recorded notes that I took away suggested patterns of behavior that were very different from the way in which teachers presented or described the same event. While it is impossible to state which story—the one that I captured in observational notes or the one that teachers told me about themselves—might be “true,” I contend the very fact that such divergence existed was itself important data that I could not have accessed without taking the status of participant observer as well as interviewer.

From a practical standpoint, it was helpful to draw upon an established and well accepted body of ethnographic interview protocols in designing my study. For example, Louise Spindler offers a purposeful approach to biographical interviewing (Spindler, 2001), while others like Lightfoot (1983) and Weis (1988, 1990; also Weiss & Fine, 1993, 1997) have made critical use of interviewing strategies in their ethnographic work. The availability of these protocols for integrating interview-based data served to add further support to the tactical case for working from within an ethnographic paradigm.

The final argument for the deployment of an ethnographic design derives from the contrast between structural and interpretive features of the question that this project poses. At its core, this study examines the dynamics of how students and teachers work across significant cultural gaps. This question, while far from simple, is nonetheless a “tightly” focused study of the dynamics of participation in the cultural life of one school. While one might argue that the question merits exploration from the standpoint of an

¹²¹ For example, how might I defend the fact that I observe one classroom and not another? Body language, gestures and other cultural language all offers the risk that I might read messages selectively.

illustrative case using the lexicon of a simple case study method (Yin, 2003), even the framework of an ethnographic case study is not suited to the question that this study explores. Stake (1995) took pains to detail the difference between case study research and other types of qualitative study. He suggested that case study methodologies were best suited to a “bounded system” such as a single classroom or the practice of a single teacher that was tightly contained by virtue of its setting. Merriam (1998) also suggested that tight limiting features of setting or actors were essential to establish a bona fide case study. By contrast, Merriam noted that as the range of plausible interview subjects grew, the appropriateness of a case study approach fell dramatically. Stake’s distinction serves well: Bounded systems invite a case study approach, while larger dynamics or processes that might transcend small, closed systems, do not. In this study, the question of how to understand participation in a culturally diverse system offers an interpretive framework much narrower than any possible structural boundaries. No one setting within the school offers sufficient data to answer the question. Based on this lack of structural bounding, I again argue that an interpretively focused but broad-reaching ethnographic approach offers the best possible avenue for investigating the core question of this study.

I close by revisiting Shulman’s claim that a given research question possesses unique dynamics that suggest specific modes of inquiry. In this study of participation by culturally heterogeneous actors in the life of a community day school, I argue that data diversity and structural limits of access to the school support a methodological preference for ethnographic research methods. While tactical considerations suggest the benefits of incorporating interview data, the diversity of actors available to explore the tightly

bounded interpretive question at hand all further reinforce the preference for ethnography. The longstanding affinity for ethnographic research methods among scholars of school culture cements the final argument for the use of ethnographic research methods in this project. Shulman's litmus test seems well satisfied.

Plan for Field Research

Time Frame

While Wolcott (1999) suggested that three months was the minimum period of field-work required for an ethnographic study, he added that it was preferable for a researcher to participate in one full annual cycle of activity in an institution.¹²² In the course of my field work, I had an opportunity to work intensely with the senior administrative leadership of CDS as well as rank and file teachers for the course of a full school year. This experience gave me a tremendous advantage as a researcher, as I quickly acquired the status of a full participant in the life of CDS. The intense and delicate work that most field researchers invest in cultivating sources and negotiating entry to privileged settings fell into place smoothly and transparently.¹²³

The time frame of my work with CDS began with formal coordination between myself and the school's administration and the negotiation of my role in the school, roughly between the Spring of 2005 until the Summer of 2005. I also began the process

¹²² Wolcott is well known for devoting extended periods of field research to his projects. (See Wolcott, 1973, 2003) By contrast, Lightfoot (1983) argued that short, intense visits to schools combined with strategic use of documentary evidence allowed researchers sufficient clarity to effectively describe their sites of observation in rich "portraiture."

¹²³ In accordance with the professional ethics of field work as well as the parameters of IRB guidelines including informed consent, I was always scrupulous to disclose my status as a researcher. In most cases this disclosure only served to afford even greater levels of access, as staff soon became deeply interested in the project.

of securing formal IRB approval from the University of Maryland for human subject research during this period. During the summer and fall of 2005 I worked intensively with the Head of School, lead administrators and a large number of faculty members in my role as a staff trainer. From the fall 2005 until the spring of 2006, I continued to train faculty and took my place as a classroom teacher in CDS's high school division, a role that gave me access to all teachers in this division on a daily basis. This position allowed me approximately thirty hours per-week to participate in the life of the school while taking field notes, collecting documents and collecting data regarding a range of cultural artifacts that played a valuable role in this study. In the spring of 2006, I began to conduct formally structured interviews, which extended into the early summer of 2006. I found it extremely helpful to defer formal interviews until this time, as it allowed me to become familiar with all actors in the school prior to data collection. I continued the process of collecting documents, noting artifacts and seeking interviews until I reached a state of data saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I formally exited the field late in the summer of 2006, well within the bounds of IRB approved access to my informants.

Sampling Strategy

Within CDS itself, I have identified sites in which students and faculty seem to bring obvious differences of cultural orientation to their encounters with one another. I selected two classrooms as key sites for observation based upon both the quality of interactions that took place in these spaces as well as the comfort that the teachers of these classes had with participation in structured interviews. Patton (1990) argued in favor of such a purposeful sampling strategy, as it allows a researcher to maximize access to data-rich environments and helped frame a continuum of behaviors by illustrating bounding

extremes. Patton also suggested that this sampling strategy was particularly valuable for ethnographic researchers seeking to identify the most “revelatory” sites for observation (Patton, 1990, pp.170-1).¹²⁴ This strategy of sampling is well grounded in the qualitative literature in general (Cusick, 1983; Marshal & Rossman, 1999; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998) and accepted among ethnographers in particular (Wolcott, 1995).

Beyond the classroom, several sites proved particularly critical venues for observing the culture of the school on display. The most important sites that drew my regular attention included the Jewish Studies Department staff room, a site where I could always turn for input, assistance and free flowing banter about the state of the school.¹²⁵ The next most valuable site of observation was Friday Assembly, a public gathering that was a regularly scheduled component of the school’s academic calendar.¹²⁶ Assembly featured discussions, speeches and (most importantly) a host of student dialogue that reflected students’ impressions of the school.

In scheduling interviews with lead informants, I sought as much breadth as was feasible, interviewing almost every Jewish studies faculty member of the high school, staff members responsible for admissions and student life as well as the division principal, the Head of School and the rabbi of the congregation which sponsored CDS. By the end of the year, I also recruited parents of current students for interviews in order to gain data about the home cultures and religious philosophies that students brought with them as participants in the life of CDS. While I invited all parents of students in the classrooms that I observed, I made special efforts to enlist the parents of students whose

¹²⁴ Also see Stake (1995) and Yin (2003).

¹²⁵ Data gathered from this site was brought either as my own impression as a participant in the school (Eisner, 1991) or as a quote with the permission of the speaker.

¹²⁶ As such, this site was also an acceptable venue for observation and note-taking under UMD-IRB regulations.

interactions with teaching faculty were somehow notable. This process of “chain” or “snow-ball” sampling of individuals linked to participants in a primary site of field work is also a commonly used sampling approach. (Merriam, 1998) This final set of parent interviews took place at the end of the academic year. This time-frame for parent interviews served to insulate me from pre-judging student participation in the classroom, while reserving the bulk of my time for field observation in the early stages of research.

Observation Procedures for Primary Sites

After securing the consent of lead informants, I observed their classrooms for several months in order to take observational notes of interactions with students. Such field notes typically capture the physical layout of the classroom (Wolcott, 1977), record classroom dialogue, identify coded or culturally distinctive patterns of language (Delpit, 1988; Heath, 1983) and note a range of artifacts, kinesthetics, and non-verbal communications (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).¹²⁷ I captured the field data noted above using a pen and paper journal, by scanning the classroom at two minute intervals to check for any relevant data. Wolcott (1973) noted that such a constant flow of data capture was particularly helpful in situating the researcher as a non-conspicuous presence in the school environment.

Interview Procedures

The methodological literature on ethnography distinguishes between open-ended and closed-ended interview protocols (Agar, 1996; Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999; Spradley, 1979). In an unfamiliar setting, an open ended interview offers an important

¹²⁷ No informed consent is required for in-class observation, as it pertains to the regular conduct of the instructional process.

vehicle for researchers to explore cultural terrain that was previously inaccessible (Agar, 1980). Closed-ended protocols also have significant value, primarily when the researcher has a greater degree of knowledge about his or her subject and setting from the outset.¹²⁸ While leaving space for open, informant driven lines of discussion, I initially employed a more closed-ended interviewing strategy that generated questions based upon prior field work and professional experience with key informants.

Initial close-ended interview protocols were used to guide interviews with lead informants. I interviewed lead informants several times over the course of classroom observations in order to gain basic information and to follow up on issues that emerged from classroom interactions. Data drawn from in-class observation about the relationships among students and faculty helped produce a series of follow-up questions during the course of field work. Follow-up interviews took on a much more open-ended character, and frequently allowed me to seek additional information about topics which were only addressed briefly in prior conversations. For parent interviews I drew upon a different set of questions that examined their experiences of the culture of CDS in addition to soliciting input regarding the nature of their children's interaction with peers and faculty. Given limited access to parents, there was not an opportunity to conduct open-ended follow up interviews with these informants, so these interviews maintained a more fixed, closed ended character. Interviews with administrators were all based upon questions posed to staff members, although each interview with this category of informants was individualized to reflect the unique position and greater knowledge of these informants.

¹²⁸ In contrast to both of these methods, Agar (1983) described an analytic protocol that allows the interviewer to balance an open stance, where the informant sets the conversational agenda, with a directive post-hoc approach to segmenting interview data.

All interviews were conducted in a private setting, and I explained risks and issues of confidentiality to my informants and secured informed consent in writing prior to the start of interviews. I asked all informants for their written consent to digitally record each interview.¹²⁹ Each interview was transcribed, and identifying information was coded to protect confidentiality. Original digital audio recordings were archived on electronic media, and were never stored at the research site. At the close of the transcription process, all identifying original media was erased or otherwise destroyed. For a full listing of interview protocols, see Appendix A.

I also interviewed other teaching staff to probe their view of emergent issues using the same format as the “periodic probe” questions, noted above. Given the degree to which faculty often discussed the school and its culture in staff meetings and during informal conversation, I sought written consent from faculty to quote remarks made in these settings.¹³⁰ While I noted that conversation in the staff lounge and the content of the weekly Friday Assembly offered valuable field data, I also made a point to observe daily prayer services and other activities that were incorporated into the regular schedule of the school week.¹³¹ The rationale for observing these sites varied. Assemblies were a particularly important space to observe school culture in action. Students partially facilitated these weekly gatherings which included faculty and administrators, and frequently used this space to express their own views about life in school. By contrast,

¹²⁹ Only one subject declined to provide such consent, insisting that I take written notes of the interview without maintaining an electronic record.

¹³⁰ Note: This information may be used according to UMD-IRB guidelines, provided that formal consent has been received, in writing, beforehand. (As per email correspondence with Heather Rowan, 9/26/2005.) Accordingly, informed consent forms that I gave to faculty included explicit language that either authorized or declined to authorize the incorporation of informal conversations into my research notes.

¹³¹ Given the role of these events as regular features in the school schedule, field notes from educational assemblies and mandatory prayer services did not require IRB approval or informed consent, as long as they were not recorded electronically.

prayer services offered an opportunity to observe how students complied with (or resisted) the school's policy that all students must attend morning worship.

Documentary Evidence and Artifacts

CDS made available extensive written records such as curriculum documents, accreditation reports, promotional videos and printed public relations material. CDS also had a unique tradition of student-produced videos, which often satirized elements of life at school. These artifacts offered a valuable window into student views about the culture of their school. Over the course of my field work, I made copies of flyers posted in the hallways, and digitally photographed other artwork or flyers too large to copy. Finally, the school offered access to publicly distributed email communications, notes, flyers and memos from the course of an entire year. All of these media were logged digitally to facilitate coding along with other observational notes and interview transcripts. While video-tape and student films posed certain challenges, clear guidelines exist for transcribing and coding these artifacts,¹³² and the use of such supplemental data is the standard of practice in ethnographic field work (Lightfoot, 1983; Wolcott, 1995). It was particularly valuable to have access to a broad range of supplemental sources, as it allowed me aggregate data from multiple perspectives in order to explore emerging themes of my on-site and interview-based field work.

¹³² Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggested a range of approaches for analyzing and incorporating film and non-observational video recordings into qualitative research. Ellsworth's (1997) scholarly work integrates film theory and stance-perspective study into the discipline of curriculum theory, and offers further methodological guidance on how to draw data from video artifacts.

Coding and Data Analysis

At the level of data analysis, I worked to generate theory about the nature of culture at CDS by exploring emerging themes from within my field work. All field data was transcribed, saved or otherwise preserved in a data format that allowed for data to be imported into a qualitative relational database program and coded for analysis. The particular program that I used was NVIVO, which is broadly recognized as an accepted tool for analytic work among qualitative researchers. While a structure for coding grew organically out of field data and interviews, I drew important cognitive guidance in constructing a coding schema from the literature on communities of practice, which I will discuss in depth in the next section of this chapter.

Interpretive Schema for Data Analysis

The Need for an Interpretive Framework

Maxwell (1996) and Merriam (1998) argued that it is essential to impose a theoretical frame on the qualitative research process from the very initial stages of study design so that exacting methodologies for data collection and analytic approaches were clearly pre-figured in the initial stages of a project. By contrast, Yin (2003) claimed that tight theoretical models were essential to case study research, but offered the possibility that other methods such as ethnography might defensibly “avoid specifying any theoretical propositions at the outset of an inquiry” (p. 28). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) suggested that, at a minimum, the ethnographic researcher must offer a clear definition of concepts and sufficiently explicit methods of data collection as to allow for replicability.

In the field of ethnographic research, the range of analytic stances bounded on one side by Yin's formalism, on the other by Goetz and LeCompte's emergent modeling, seems to offer unusually broad latitude for the researcher upon exiting the field. Mead (1928) went into the field with not more than a notepad and returned with tales of Samoa just as Peshkin (1986) conducted his own exotic expedition into the world of a fundamentalist Christian school. Neither work made any reference whatsoever to methodological or theoretical concerns at the outset. Indeed, scholars later lambasted Mead for possibly making very serious errors of scholarly judgment due to her lack of methodological precision.¹³³

By contrast, Wolcott's (1973) classic study of the school principalship opened with a thorough discussion of methodology, down to the level of how often he took notes, but no systematic schema for analysis whatsoever. His later study of dysfunctional school administration also offers several chapters of tightly argued structural anthropology in advance of his first page of analytic work (Wolcott, 1977). This progression suggests a kind of natural tension within ethnography. Increasingly, scholars like Wolcott (1986) have come to argue that going to the field with a notebook and an interview protocol is not enough. To do ethnography, Wolcott argues that one must begin to think like an anthropologist by looking for structures and larger patterns of coherent meaning in the world. For this reason, I contend that it is critical for a researcher to work out the theoretical structure of how one will "see" the world in some detail even before entering the field or gathering the data that he will later analyze and schematize. Out of such

¹³³ Freeman (1983, 2000) has emerged as the lead voice challenging the nature of Mead's findings based upon her own biases, projections and misunderstanding of the reports of her lead informants. While it is not my purpose to argue one side or another of this controversy, the very existence of this controversy underscores the importance of clearly worked out structures for assessing field data. For a more dispassionate treatment of the larger argument regarding Mead's work, see Holmes (1987).

concern for guiding theory, I heartily affirm Lather's (1991) observation that "method does not give truth; it corrects guesses." Just as this study elected ethnography as a methodology for collecting data, it also employs a carefully chosen theoretical schema for drawing meaningful conclusions from the data that emerged in the course of field work. In the next section of this study, I will offer an introduction to the communities of practice literature which served as the analytic lens that helps move this study from rich impressions towards coherent and clearly argued findings.

Underlying Theory

Before explicating details of the community of practice literature, it is helpful to note the roots of this theory in both the epistemological and philosophical study of cognition. Lave's (1988) important study, *Cognition in Practice*, built upon two generations of anthropological research into the structure of cognition. Specifically, Lave examined an odd development among Vai and Gola tailors in Liberia, who employed a sophisticated but non-standard mathematical system that they learned as apprentices to older, master tailors. These same apprentice tailors often excelled at learning standard Western mathematical conventions in school, but did not apply them to their trade work (Lave, 1977, 1980, 1982). Lave attributed such variations in approach to what became known as "situated cognition,"¹³⁴ the idea that people will make use of distinct modalities of

¹³⁴ A second, corollary notion to situated cognition also exists, called "distributed cognition." Distributed cognition studies the manner by which certain complicated cognitive activities are assumed by multiple actors in a human system. In this setting, multiple individuals think and communicate in an elegant dance that ultimately takes on the form of a larger, thinking organism. See Hutchins and Klausen's (1996) study of "Distributed Cognition in an Airline Cockpit," in which no fewer than three pilots and two controllers must interact to safely guide a jet plane through one and a half minutes of flight. Notions of distributed cognition have entered the leadership literature via Weick (1976), Wheatley (1992), Yukl (1994), Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) as well as Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach's (1999) work. This thread of thinking gave rise to the concept of "distributed leadership," which posits that schools can maximize their effectiveness by sharing important responsibilities broadly among teachers and administrators to create

thinking depending upon the context in which they find themselves. Later, Lave and Wenger (1991) expanded this notion into a more developed theory of social learning and apprenticeship patterns. The crucial conclusion of Lave and Wenger's work was the notion that social context formed a critical, if surprisingly variable, commonplace for the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Absent the appropriate context, a given set of knowledge simply could not exist.

The community of practice literature also builds upon important philosophical work by Habermas. Habermas' work towards a theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984; Honneth & Joas, 1991) offered a critical foundation for the community of practice literature by exploring the notion of dialogical relationship. Habermas' writing suggested that "all speech exists in a context of actions and intentions," (1970, p. 371) a "double structure" (1979, p. 42) that Habermas defined as locutionary and illocutionary communication. These two kinds of communications are distinguished by the extent to which the speaker's perspective is critical to validating his or her statement. Hence, locutionary speech draws validity from its "objective content" while illocutionary communication concerns the intersubjective world, in which joint appraisal and negotiation of meaning is the core to substantiating meaning (Morrison, 2002). Habermas added a further distinction by identifying perlocution: speech that is premised towards achieving discrete ends or interests by virtue of the authority of the speaker. (Habermas, 1982) Morrison reflected the critical difference between illocution and perlocution by noting how these styles of communication might impact school leadership.

effective decision making partnerships. For a selection of some of the most important literature on distributed leadership, see: Camburn, Rowan and Taylor (2003), Gronn (2000), Ogawa and Bossert (1995), Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001, 2004) and Wallace (2002).

A genuinely dialogical communication is open and illocutionary rather than perlocutionary. It does not know its outcomes; they are to be negotiated rather than simply received...The implication here is that illocutions flourish in open, democratic and collegial...systems, whereas perlocutions are the stuff of hierarchical, bureaucratic...styles. (Morrison, 2002 , p. 142)

Habermas' notion of communicative action invites individuals to adopt "the perspective of acting subjects...(within) the *lifeworld of a social group*" (1984 , p. 117. Italics in original). In such a setting, the encounter of a group, not the voice of an individual, determines what is meaningful, valid and true.

One final influence on the community of practice literature emerged from Bourdieu's sociology. While much of Bourdieu's work made a technical argument about the nature human agency beyond earlier, limiting categories of structure or function, he is perhaps best known for creating a notion of capital that included the study of culture and language as vehicles for conferring status. Bourdieu (1990) suggested two critical ideas for understanding the transmission of social status: habitus and practice. Roughly, habitus reflects the world of ideas and experiences that a person encounters. These underlying structures or experiences give the person a framework for experiencing and acting in the world, enabling but also limiting a person's choices by offering a mental map of the world, and a menu of choices that one makes within that world.¹³⁵ While Bourdieu never intended to erase free will in human agency, he argued that individual action could be severely constrained, as habitus could dictate what was thinkable or unthinkable (Scahill, 1993). Habitus also offers an important mechanism for maintaining shared norms or resisting the imposition of outside cultural forces.¹³⁶ The most important

¹³⁵ "L'habitus tend à engendrer toutes les conduites «raisonnables», de «sens commun»" Bourdieu (1980). Bourdieu chose this language with some care, with specific interest in the "generative capacity" suggested by habitus, ie, the ability of habitus to recreate itself in the social world (Bourdieu, 1990).

¹³⁶ "L'habitus tend à assurer sa propre constance et sa propre défense contre le changement à travers la sélection qu'il opère entre les informations nouvelles..." (Bourdieu, 1980).

element of this theory that Bourdieu described was the notion that habitus generates “practices” (Bourdieu, 1977). In Bourdieu’s terms, practices are deeply embedded and culturally nuanced behaviors that link their enactors together in a “thick” matrix of meanings and shared associations.¹³⁷ While habitus creates practice, the reciprocal effect of practice is that it further reinforces shared notions of habitus, the totalizing values which make for shared and coherent experiences of communal culture.

The ideas of Lave, Bourdieu and Habermas come to suggest three critical propositions. First, people think and act differently depending upon the social context in which they find themselves. Second, discrete practices of a given community both reflect and reinforce the values and priorities of that community. Third, when individuals join together around shared acts of deed or speech, they have the ability to negotiate powerful, shared understandings. The “threads” of these three ideas are tightly woven together in the final cloth of the community of practice literature, to which I shall turn next.

Essential Notions of the Communities of Practice Literature

Wenger’s (1999) *Communities of Practice* largely set the state of the field for this literature. In brief, Wenger argues that participants who belong to communities of practice gain access to shared repertoires (which he identifies as practices) that substantiate their larger identity. In this relationship, practice is a loosely identifiable set

¹³⁷ “Produit de l’histoire, l’habitus produit des pratiques, individuelles et collectives, donc de l’histoire, conformément aux schèmes engendrés par l’histoire; il assure la présence active des expériences passées qui, déposées en chaque organisme sous la forme de schèmes de perception, de pensée et d’action, tendent, plus sûrement que toutes les règles formelles et toutes les normes explicites, à garantir la conformité des pratiques et leur constance à travers le temps” Bourdieu (1980). A good example of the dynamic between habitus and practice might be the benign sexism of chivalry, which (in some societies) dictates that men should stop and hold doors open for women. The value of male status and role as protector of women (an aspect of the habitus that might be reinforced by women’s dress and speech rules) creates the practice of holding open doors for women. This practice enacts the values inherent in the habitus of chivalry, while simultaneously teaching men and women that society expects them to conform to their “given” roles.

of core activities that derive from the core values and *raison d'être* of a given community. While participating in community gives people access to certain practices, it is just as important to note that the performance of these practices legitimizes an individual's place in community.

The value and identity components of practice are tied to the complementary dynamics of participation and reification (Wenger, 1999). Briefly, participation describes shared actions which gives individuals access to common patterns of behavior, language or insider knowledge. In the process of reification, the larger community makes decisions about what kinds of participation are licit and praiseworthy. In this fashion, communities decide what their expectations are by praising the thoughtful or normative practitioner and sanctioning those whose practice is either poor or different in a way that might create opposing norms. Crucially, such notions of good and bad practice are not set in stone—the community must negotiate them and develop consensus among themselves. Those who care to debate with one another about what makes for good practice become a community by participating in this meaning making process (Wenger, 1999).

Wenger offered an important set of distinctions regarding what actually constitutes community membership. One may belong to a community by engaging or actively participating in its core activities (Wenger, 1999). Simultaneously, one may participate from the periphery by maintaining an interest in core practices, even if one does not enact them. Lave and Wenger (1991) discussed the crucial role of peripheral participation that dedicated observers (such as apprentices) undertake, arguing that even one who does not perform core practices may maintain an important connection with the larger practicing

community.¹³⁸ Wenger further described imagination and alignment (Wenger, 1999) as two processes which allow peripheral participants to share idealized values or selected practices with engaged community members. The key to all of these modalities is that belonging affects a person's sense of core identity vis a vis their relationship to the larger corporate body (Wenger, 1999).

Based upon his model of participation, reification and community, Wenger sketched a sophisticated notion of identity. First, it is critical to note that identity is not constituted *a priori*, as a point of entry to the community of practice. Rather, the act of practicing within a community itself enables “the delicate process of negotiating viable identities” (Wenger, 1999, p. 175, 197-206). Once formed, “the lived experience of identity” (Wenger, 1999, p. 145) becomes the pivot that allows an individual to situate himself or herself within community, such that it accommodates both the norms of the group and the uniqueness of an individual group member. Second, identity is very deeply embedded in practice. It is not an idea, but rather a way of being that is made manifest by clear shared behaviors, symbols, conventions and rituals (Wenger, 1999). As such, what people do in communal settings deeply informs who they become for one another. Wenger summed up this process of shared, negotiated and co-constructed identity making in the following definition: “An identity, then, is a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other.” (Wenger, 1999, p. 151).

¹³⁸ See Wenger (1999) on the ability to participate from the periphery. For further discussion, also see Lave's work (1977, 1980, 1982, 1988).

Mapping Community

Within the literature on Communities of Practice, an important thread of scholarship argues that we can speak with some clarity about what educational community looks like. While schemata of community differ, the broad theme of “coherence” runs deeply through each version of school organization that attempts to represent authentic community.

Strike (2003) argued that educational community exists when “all members of the school are engaged in a shared educational project.” Such cohesiveness within the school parallels coherence between the school’s notion of “educational goods” and “the community’s primary goods.” This situation represents a deep axiological attunement on the part of school and community, as the work of the school (its “shared educational project”) does not merely reflect or respond to community values, but rather, forms “the basis of the community’s self-understanding.” In short, school becomes a place where the values of the community are made manifest, are palpable to all present, and suffuse the life of the school such that life in school becomes a natural step towards participation in adult community. The communally shared notion of a good society becomes the essential precondition for a vision of the role of education in human flourishing (Strike, 2004).¹³⁹ It is a totalizing picture which imbues each aspect of the school / community matrix with meaning.

¹³⁹ Strike, in his 2004 article, strengthened the foundation laid in his 2003 piece by arguing for a clear and coherent picture which links communal values to a philosophy of education. He argued that the “education goods” of school should cohere with the community’s vision of what is valuable. The result was a coherent philosophy of education within the context of a given community, an arrangement that Strike renders as “a vision of the role of education in human flourishing” (Strike, 2004, p. 223). When this vision is expressed through cooperative activity, it creates a “shared educational project” that is coherent with the language of both school staff and the larger community. Hence, the essential shared activity of school and community flows naturally from a common vision.

Working from this picture of coherence between axiological and practical¹⁴⁰ aspects of the school, Strike argues that schools (as communities) exist in a variety of forms: the tribe, the congregation, the orchestra and the family.

Members of a tribe share a common form of life, common cultural practices and common patterns for discourse. Out of such social glue, tribe members become more transparent to one another. (Strike, 2003)

In contrast to tribal community, Strike further noted the model of congregation. In congregations, people draw together out of a set of core convictions, values and beliefs that unite them. This form of community offers a radically different possibility. In the tribe, the binding goods go very deep, but are still externally manifested as behavioral norms. In the congregation, the goods of community are initially internal, dwelling on the level of philosophy and belief. While Strike expected that internal goods would translate into external behaviors, there is no guarantee that external manifestations would cohere-nor must they. In such a well grounded community, it is possible that similarly motivated individuals might disagree deeply over what to do about their common beliefs without in any way weakening the force of their common, shared bonds of belief.¹⁴¹

The orchestra offers a good counter example to both the congregation and the tribe. In orchestra communities, people are drawn together based upon a commitment to the values inherent in a shared practice. Orchestra members practice a craft, and esteem those who do it well, but at the end of the day they close their instrument cases and must engage the world based upon deeper, more durable notions of self.

¹⁴⁰ I intend the word “practical,” above, in the pedagogic sense of Max van Manen (1977, 2002).

¹⁴¹ For example, Westheimer (1999) argued that where shared belief motivates differential approaches to practice, the school still could succeed in producing an outstanding learning environment, as long as patterns of belief remained durable in the school, and as long as the school privileged ideals over practice as an organizing principle.

Finally, Strike identified the family as one model of community that is often adopted in schooling. Families are, by definition, inclusive. Even if family members were fundamentally different from one another in the values they held, even if they did not share any common activities, these individuals remain fundamentally and irrevocably part of each other's family. While the embracing force of this model offers important advantages, Strike noted that it is the weakest model of community as it fails to generate coherence of action or belief.

In addition to Strike's conceptual mapping, Westheimer (1999) offered several additional models for thinking about school community. He identified "shared belief, particularly language and culture" as an important feature of community, features which essentially blend Strike's notion of tribe and congregation. Westheimer further identified concern for the inclusion of individual and minority view, a feature which aligns (but is not fully equivalent) with Strike's definition of family, as described above. To these, Westheimer added three extremely important observations regarding participation, reciprocity and meaning.

Westheimer suggested that authentic community emerges from high levels of participation and interaction (Westheimer, 1999). Belonging to a community is not a casual affiliation, rather, it is a commitment that is evidenced by deep engagement on the part of each individual over extended periods of time in ways that demonstrate the value of being together.¹⁴² At the same time, community implies interdependence and reciprocity. It is one thing for teachers to work past midnight or on weekends, but quite

¹⁴² Westheimer's classic example of this type of deep engagement was encapsulated in the example of faculty members who expressed delight that they could "wak[e] up in the middle of the night with an idea ... and call up somebody else [to ask], "What do you think of this?" (Westheimer, 1999, p.84). Clearly, this kind of community is not for sound sleepers—nor does it allow for erratic commitments.

another for teachers to know that they can call other colleagues midnight, on weekends—or even in the middle of the school day.¹⁴³ This example of community presumes that teachers see themselves in a relationship with one another that fundamentally invites colleagues to make a claim upon them based upon shared, deep commitments.¹⁴⁴

While Strike might try to rationalize this category of “reciprocity” under the heading of commitment to shared goods, it is equally plausible that one might find high levels of interdependence even in the absence of the clear values of “communal goods.”

Interdependence, as described by Westheimer, is also much stronger than Strike’s notion of “family,” as the family that he describes takes for granted the fact of being together.

To Westheimer, the connection is more highly valued and more deliberately enacted.

Yet, there are some notable similarities to family. Out of such “thick community”¹⁴⁵ one finds a “space for meaningful relationships.” In Westheimer’s view, the commitment of teachers to come together as professionals as well as a deliberate agreement to open their lives to each other created a space where connection to others was deeply personalized, and hence, deeply meaningful.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Westheimer (1999) argues that a pervasive culture of privacy exists in American schools. Schools which pierce this bubble by encouraging faculty to share elements of practice deeply with colleagues offer examples of a unique and deeply held working culture.

¹⁴⁴ A theology teacher of mine who is a naturalized American citizen once described to me, in deeply moving terms, the ceremony of being sworn into citizenship. In addition to the clear ritual nature of the experience, he marveled at the INS official who addressed his group and promised that “Wherever you are in the world, you are an American citizen now, and the US government will be there to help you if you are in need.” The message was “you are now part of the community—your welfare is now part of our welfare.”

¹⁴⁵ For a much deeper discussion of the goods which accrue from communities that are more or less cohesive in character, see Wysong’s (1994) arguments for the creation of deeper, “thicker” communities within American schools. Collins (1994) follows with a well argued counterpoint highlighting the potential for non- or even anti-liberal tendencies to emerge from such schools.

¹⁴⁶ It is worth noting that Westheimer (1999) clearly favors one kind of community over another in his taxonomy of defining community values. His study explored the nature of community in two schools, one which offered a more privatized approach to education, the other more collective. In reviewing the benefits of both schools, Westheimer offered a continuum spanning the quality between “liberal” and “collective” orientations, noting that each individual school rested at multiple points of this continuum at any given time. Clearly, Westheimer preferred the collective above that of the liberal school, as one can hardly

While Strike and Westheimer drew relatively clear pictures of what community could mean, a few caveats are in order. First, even though the rubrics of community offered above stress coherence, one should not then deduce that discord indicates weakness or lack of community. Indeed, extraordinarily strong communities can exist against a backdrop of significant tensions or disagreements. In some communities, conflict surfaces precisely because the fundamental structure of community is durable enough to make contested discourse “safe.”¹⁴⁷

The second caveat is that we ought to be extremely circumspect about what meanings are invoked by virtue of an appeal to “community.” Westheimer (1999) pointed out a serious problem when he argues that community is radically “underconceptualized” (p. 172) or used in a troublingly vague fashion. Even worse, the appeal to community can easily become a quick fix or an attempt to avoid deeper, more troubling issues such as structural inequality in school districts and the like (Westheimer, 1999). To appropriate Strike’s language, I would offer that substantive community represents a “good,” but mere rhetoric about community can easily translate into a “bad.” In particular, Strike noted that some schools appeal to the Rawlsian values of “durable pluralism” as a fundamental basis for convening community. He argued that such a “vague sense of shared values” is the exact antithesis of real community (Strike, 2003, pp. 69-71)¹⁴⁸

imagine making such deep and personal connections within the thin and laissez faire context of Westheimer’s “liberal” school.

¹⁴⁷ See Westheimer (1999) for an example of how shared belief structures “contain” conflict (p. 84). Also note Strike’s (2003) discussion regarding the difference between tradition and dogma as communal goods which can impact not the likelihood but rather the *kind* of conflict that take place within institutions.

¹⁴⁸ Again, Strike (2003) suggested that true community develops around “a school that is united by a shared non-instrumental vision of a good education rooted in a shared view of human flourishing” (p. 71). For an

Strike's claim forces a return to the question that orients my larger study: What is the nature of community that a heterodox grouping of students and faculty negotiate within the walls of an (ostensibly) pluralistic Jewish day school? The attempt to map the taxonomy of community, above, offers important direction for research. First, one should be cautious if not openly suspicious of claims to inclusiveness. Any such claim should prompt the researcher to ask: What problems or divisions lay beneath this claim? How are those issues addressed within the school? How are they avoided? Second, one should be extremely sensitive to the dynamics of order and discord. Order need not indicate communal coherence, nor should conflict be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Instead, the researcher ought to explore sites where both order as well as discord reign, seeking to understand how they come into being and what contribution these dynamics make to the ongoing structure of the school. Third, one should tactfully employ the various categories of community described above as a lens to reveal meaning in first-hand observation of communal life. To what extent do examples of caring reveal a family structure of communal coherence? Do tribal patterns of "deep" cultural norms guide the life of the school?¹⁴⁹ These kinds of questions offer crucial guidelines for assessing the importance of the qualitative data that emerged in the course of field work.

Research Quality and Ethical Practice

At its core, the case for a strong set of research methods is motivated by the desire to effectively gather information and generate valid conclusions regarding the dynamics of social interaction. Given the nature of research in the social sciences, questions of

extended discussion of this model, see Strike's (1994) Presidential address at the Proceedings of the Fiftieth Annual Meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society.

¹⁴⁹ See Finkelstein, Pickert, Mahoney and Barry (1998) for a more lengthy discussion of the role of culture in shaping the character of schooling.

research quality and ethical practice occupy an important role in the design and execution of this study. Accordingly, it is important to note areas where careful reflection on standards of practice has helped to bolster the methodological quality of this work. These three areas involve efforts to guarantee the reliability of this study, clarity about claims of research validity and attentiveness to the ethical quandaries of field work.

Reliability

Within the realm of quantitative research methodology, reliability is classically understood as the ability of a specific experiment or research instrument to deliver similar results over repeated use. While educational researchers differ over the applicability of quantitative methodological categories to qualitative studies such as the exploration of culture (Smith & Heshusius, 1986), the notion that similarly positioned scholars would emerge from field work with similar results remains one of the underpinning assumptions of this study. The reliability of this study derives from two important methods which are built into the framework of field research. Wherever possible, evidence has been triangulated so that conclusions draw from more than one source and ideally from more than one kind of evidence (Wolcott, 1999). Extensive interviews with a broad number of participants in the life of CDS also allowed for adequate member checking so that propositions and preliminary explanations about the meaning of events within CDS might be explained and interpreted by the primary members of this school community (Maxwell, 1996). Given its incorporation of strong procedures for data triangulation and member checking, this study meets best-practice standards for qualitative methods of field work.

Validity

The most concise definition of validity is the question of whether the methods employed in a given study effectively measured the phenomenon that the study promised to explore (Mason & Bramble, 1989). Political polls offer a concise example. If we wish to know whether the president of the United States has done a good job as an economic leader, we might survey individuals regarding their approval of his or her decisions. While a low approval rating might be cause for concern, the validity of this measure would still be inconclusive since people might disapprove of a president even if economic activity rose. Such an opinion poll would lack validity since it really did not reach the core question that the study sought to explore, namely, the relationship between a president's leadership choices and the performance of the economy.

In the realm of qualitative studies, the quandaries surrounding validity are compounded by the growth of this relatively new field which is still on its way to maturation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A range of views regarding validity exist, including the argument that qualitative studies in general (and ethnography in particular) should be artistic, illustrative, poetic or even actively subversive (Lincoln, 1997). By referencing the range of studies that I cite in Chapter Two, I suggest that there is some degree of accepted practice in the field of educational research and that the application of ethnographic methods to questions of school culture brings an inherent degree of validity to this study.

Noting the tightly constructed nature of validity discussions within the realm of quantitative studies, I still make relatively modest claims about the validity of this or any other ethnographic study and do not argue that it is the only possible method available. I

also do not suggest that this study need offer over-arching truths about the state of culture in schools in order to fulfill the expectation the research method was wisely selected. I am certainly not alone in this stance. While Page's (1997) argument that the pursuit of strong standards of ethnographic research validity might be Quixotic or even "absurd" clearly overstated the intellectual quandary that qualitative field research presents, Lincoln's (1997) reply still acknowledged that a range of subjective concerns can appropriately guide methodological choices without sacrificing the expectation that research be well configured in design, predictable in execution and trustworthy in its results. Three scholarly positions offer perspective.

Behar argued that affective, even aesthetic, valuations give evidence to the quality of field work.¹⁵⁰ If the work inspires and moves the reader, then that is evidence enough of its quality as a literary testament to the truth of one particular encounter. Similarly, Wolcott (1997) questioned whether "validity is really the yardstick by which to measure the success of our efforts." Lacking confidence in the degree to which researchers could ever claim to know their informants, Wolcott posited that the success of ethnography lies in its ability to paint themes which reveal broader truths about our experience of the world. Tierney was most compelling in his reading of Geertz, as he suggested that ethnographic research was deeply valuable, but at the same time must proceed with an understanding that its conclusions are, of necessity, "partial and interpretive" (Tierney, 2002).

Given the range of stances on the question of validity, this work intends to offer defensible conclusions about one institution alone. This study is intended to be "illustrative" and to reveal questions of culture which may be relevant to many, but not

¹⁵⁰ Behar (1997) famously claimed that anthropology which "does not break your heart is not worth doing" (p. 177).

necessarily all, culturally heterogeneous schools. Within these understanding of the nature and limits of the term, this study achieves a full measure of scholarly validity.

The Quandaries of Field Work

Beyond the question of evidence and valid patterns of interpretation, I believe it is important to address two important quandaries of field work, one relating to the perspective and positioning of the researcher, the other related to the ethics of seeking informed consent. The question of perspective is one that has been noted by many outstanding researchers. As I note above, it would have been impossible for me to conduct the field work which forms the basis of this study without assuming the role of participant-observer, and also an insider, to the system that I intended to study. There are inherent contradictions to these roles. Peshkin (1986) wrestled with important questions of his own identity as an outsider who had been invited into a closed religious community while doing field work for *God's Choice*. His personal involvement included areas in which he had to wrestle with his own faith, his identity as a Jewish outsider in a Christian school and even his relationship to peers who advocated his conversion to Christianity. Cossentino (2005), in one study of Montessori schooling, took pains to note her lack of "training" which would have marked her as a fully indoctrinated member of the community of Montessori educators. In this case, one reads an effort to maintain critical perspective and appropriate scholarly distance. Deyhle, Hess, and Lecompte (1992) wrote about the ethics of gaining insider credentials, and questioned whether such scholarly moves involved an ethical betrayal or a manipulation of community

members.¹⁵¹ Finally, there is a long standing and critical discussion within the field of anthropology about the nature of “emic” and “etic” knowledge.¹⁵² In each case, the positioning of the researcher with respect to a given social structure affects access to knowledge, ability to make judgments and even can raise questions about a scholarly objectivity. As part of this study’s review of methodological issues, it will suffice to clearly identify concerns about my simultaneous roles as insider and observer. I will explore this question further in the two chapters which follow.

The final issue of methodology which deserves note is the question of ethics and informed consent. The commitment that this study makes towards the maintenance of high standards of informed consent is reflected earlier in this chapter. I have made a particular commitment to honoring the confidentiality of my informants, in accordance with best practices of educational research. That said, it is important to note one unique and intractable issue that accompanies my field work. Given the distinctive character of the school which I studied and the relatively small size of the Jewish day school community, it is extremely difficult to offer complete guarantees of privacy. Malone (2003) joined other educational researchers who argue that guarantees of privacy might be misleading. Some Jewish educational researchers have responded to this challenge by publishing studies that use the actual names of institutions and informants as a way to avoid potentially untenable representations of confidentiality (Pekarsky, 2006; Pomson

¹⁵¹ See Wolcott (1995) as well for a discussion of the issues involved in gaining and benefiting from access to insider communities. Tellingly, Wolcott discusses this quandary in a chapter titled “Field Work: The Darker Arts.”

¹⁵² While the nature of this debate, its history and its epistemological underpinnings are quite involved, it will suffice to note that there are some things that only natives or participants in a given society can know about how that society works (the emic view). At the same time, it is often the case that only an outsider can gain the perspective to view larger patterns of culture in the abstract with enough critical remove to draw conclusions about how a given culture or society functions (the etic view). Some deny that this distinction exists at all. For more thorough grounding in this question, see Headland, Pike and Harris (1990).

and Schnoor, 2008). While I side with this emerging convention within Jewish educational research, in practice this work at all times has been conducted in accordance with the policies of the University of Maryland and its Institutional Research Board approval guidelines. Given my respect for the lessons that I have learned from others as well as the long standing Jewish tradition of punctiliously attributing wisdom that is transmitted from teacher to student, I offer my deepest appreciation to the faculty of CDS, its leadership and dedicated families. They are truly co-authors of this work and deserve full credit for the contributions they made.

Conclusion

In the course of this chapter, I have argued that both field work and the analysis of data should be guided by a thoughtful and coherent method. Given the question I pose regarding the nature of community in a broadly bounded setting, the wealth of data that requires evaluation and the need for myself to take on the role of participant observer, I suggest that ethnography offers an appropriate method for this study. While I do acknowledge the limits of this method, I maintain that ethnographic research into school culture offers a reliable vehicle for exploring school culture. The research protocols that inform this study meet high ethical standards and cohere with credible standards of research validity by ensuring the triangulation of critical field data and offer ample opportunity for members of the school to confirm or dispute outside impressions of the school's culture. Finally, I have taken great pains to present a clear theoretical framework for the analysis of field data which draws from prior scholarship regarding the nature of community and the process of asserting identity within communities. With

these theoretical and methodological issues clearly framed, I turn towards a detailed description of findings which emerge from my field work.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction: Welcome to CDS

I sit nervously in a formal wooden chair, across the table from Mrs. Stein. Her desk parses the room into halves, visitors on one side; headmaster on the other. The room is neat, crisply decorated with books about Jewish life lining the low-slung bookshelves that abut the desk. Above, the walls are festooned with memorabilia: Awards that Mrs. Stein won, an aerial rendering of the school and an enlargement of photographs from CDS's latest viewbook. Most prominent among those photographs is a picture of three male high school students with arms locked one around the other. Their faces are illuminated by broad smiles. The bright colors of a knitted kippah frame the head of one young man. A student in the center of the photo holds an enormous Israeli flag aloft on a wooden pole. They are dressed crisply, in smart khaki pants and polo shirts bearing the logo of the school. They look happy, confident and purposeful...ready to conquer the world.

Shifting in my chair, I am feeling less and less like these students as I stare across the desk. I look past note pads, a cell phone and elegant fountain pens towards the headmaster, who flips coolly through my resume and research proposal with a commanding look on her face. I'm not one to size up women's clothing, but her outfit is sharp, well tailored...and expensive. Actually, so is the handbag that she lays casually across the credenza behind her desk...and the shoes. As I shift in my chair, I can't help but think to myself "where am I?" The expensive clothing, the elegantly decorated office and the accoutrements of power all suggest the executive suite of a CEO, not the office of

a school principal. Then the silence ends, and I struggle to keep pace with a torrent of questions.

Where are you from? (Really, your father was bar mitzvah at Sha'arey...lovely.) How did you become observant? (So of course you're a ba'al teshuvah...well, we have a lot of people like that in our community.) How do you teach? Prove that you can keep discipline in a classroom. How good is your Hebrew? What can you do for me at morning *minyan* (prayer services)? Tell me about the faculty training you did at your previous school. And on it goes.

I feel like I'm playing tennis opposite a grand-slam master. With each question, I jump to return the ball, to establish trust, to demonstrate that I respect the values of CDS's community, a community that I am trying quite earnestly to join at this moment. The first step is to prove that I have something to offer, some effective rejoinder to the devastating first serve that Mrs. Stein lobbed in my direction at the start of our conversation. "Why should I take the risk of letting you in to my school? What's in it for us?" As much as Mrs. Stein plays a hard game, so do I, peppering her with contemporary curriculum theory, teaching ideas and snippets of Talmud in Hebrew and Aramaic. When she jokes in Yiddish, I push back in Hebrew. When she shifts to Hebrew entirely, I follow her in that language for as long as it takes to establish that I am almost as fluent as she. Then finally, a smile and a gentler question, "So, tell me about the research that you are going to do at CDS." I smile back, and we talk about the class I will teach, the curriculum workshop I will design and the very meager salary I will receive. As part of this arrangement, I will enjoy unrestricted access to the school, almost any documentation that I request and, most importantly, the headmaster's blessing for my role as a field

researcher and participant observer in the life of CDS's high school. We talk about the scope of my field work, protocols for confidentiality and about the nature of conversations that I will have with faculty, administrators and parents during the coming year. We commit details to writing, countersign a memo of understanding, and finally, Mrs. Stein schedules a meeting with her division heads where she will present me and explain my role as both faculty member and field researcher. Welcome to CDS. The interview is over, and I am now on my way to becoming an insider.

As I leave the office, I pause outside the administrative suite to read a huge poster celebrating the names of top colleges that graduates are attending next fall. I open a black, bound notebook, and take my very first field notes: "5-9-05 Artifact: Recruiting materials. Large, color poster at entrance to main office. Headline: 'CDS seniors are going places.' Yale, MIT, Penn, Dartmouth..." My work has just begun.

As the months passed, the time and date stamps in the margins of several black notebooks framed my entry to the field, receipt of IRB approval, the commencement of formal interviews and finally my exit from field research. Over these fourteen months, field notes came to fill three such notebooks. In addition, thirty two significant participants in the life of CDS granted upwards of forty hours of structured interviews. Several hundred pages of faculty memos and public email correspondence supplemented this information, as did hours of audio-visual media and nearly fifty artifacts captured as digital photographs. While every researcher at the beginning of field work worries that he or she will not gather enough material for their study, I quickly came to appreciate that the more vexing challenge would be the task of making sense of an overwhelming

amount of information. The framework that I offer, below, offers a concise structure to facilitate this seemingly daunting challenge.

A Framework for Analysis

In this chapter, I offer a relatively discreet set of findings based upon the expansive and very rich evidence that I had the opportunity to collect, to analyze and ultimately to synthesize over the course of one year of field work. As I stated at the outset of this work, my purpose was to explore how a diverse group of religious studies faculty and students negotiated their shared participation in the life of one institutional structure. Given the breadth of data that my field work produced, there was always the danger that the investigator would drown his reader in detail at the expense of analysis.¹⁵³ Accordingly, I adopted a structure for this chapter that balanced complete access to the details of field work with a precise argument of the theoretical categories that offer a meaningful framework for explaining patterns of culture.

The substantive work of this chapter begins by referencing the notion of “contact point” as a theoretical frame which gives both plausibility and analytical coherence to the conclusions that I derive from field work. Following an explication of why CDS should be viewed as a classic ethnographic “contact point,” this chapter will explore three recurrent cultural dynamics that are sustained throughout the experiences of multiple participants in the life of CDS (including my own experience as field worker). These dynamics are the treatment of communal practices, the experience of inclusion or exclusion and the diversity of views surrounding the institutional mission of CDS. It is

¹⁵³ I am indebted to Dr. Betty Malen for introducing me to the following aphorism during her course on case-study methodologies: “Don’t just tell me the story. Tell me what the story means!”

hoped that this roadmap will assist the reader in understanding some of the complex nuances of life at CDS.

The Contact Point as a Theoretical Frame

Christina Thompson (2008), in a fascinating book entitled *Come on Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All*, split the genres of memoir, comparative literature and participant ethnography while chronicling her involvement in the life of the Maori community of New Zealand. In the process, Thompson touched upon a feature that is deeply involved in the process of cultural conflict and adaptation, a moment that she described as a “contact point.” In its essence, a contact point is the moment that two important cultures meet one another, setting in motion a dynamic of encounter that might be fortuitous or destructive, but can in no way be ignored. Thompson offered James Cook’s voyage which brought Europeans into the same arena as the tribal peoples of New Zealand as an example of one such encounter. In this case, the differences of motivation and culture which divided European explorers from the Maori populace that they “discovered” (and later came to colonize) brought almost immediate violence and set in motion a long and bloody dynamic of engagement. Given its possibility for good or ill, such moments of contact take on an abundance of meaning for Thompson. Attentive to the experiences of other explorers and students of culture, Thompson included Meade and Malinowski among the ranks of ethnographic travelers who experienced these moments of cultural contact, as well. Closer to the literature which motivates this study, Spindler, Peshkin and Wolcott most certainly lived out similar moments of boundary crossing in their travels as field workers. My use of the notion of “contact point” in this study ignores the researcher entirely and focuses solely on the experience of the main

actors within the life of CDS who crossed real and substantive cultural boundaries to engage one another in the microcosm that developed around CDS's high school division.

In this study of culture within one school, I argue that we should view CDS as a site of cross cultural contact. As a "contact point," CDS offered many of the features which Thompson highlighted in Cook's encounter with the Maori. There were common claims of ownership of a given space, competing cultural conventions and vastly differing *nomos* or traditions of customary cultural conduct. By rendering CDS as an ethnographic space to be explored, I deliberately intend to "make strange" the otherwise familiar spaces of classrooms, lunchrooms and school hallways (Spindler & Spindler, 1982). When approached through the more "estranging" lenses of costume, language, wealth and fidelity to tribal rites, the real diversity which charged the air of CDS became apparent. There was one additional distinction between Thompson's use of contact point and the patterns of culture which initially appeared to govern life at CDS, that being the diversity of practices and cultural habits on all sides of the encounter which took place. As I will demonstrate later on in this chapter, parties rarely lined up on wholly opposite sides of a cultural divide. While that divide was certainly real to participants in the life of CDS, so were the ongoing attempts to bridge the perceived cultural gap.

In order to justify the application of this category to my research site, I highlight several features of everyday life and culture which made CDS a contact point in the lexicon of classical ethnography. These categories, which included language, music, wealth, habits of dress and academic interests, were carefully selected to represent important and intersecting features of culture. The features of language, music and dress were the most obvious categories of culture to highlight, inasmuch as these aspects of

cultural behavior feature prominently in most of the prominent ethnographic literature of the field including Malinowski, Mead and Geertz. Indeed, it would be unthinkable for a scholar like Malinowski to begin describing the life of Trobriand natives without addressing these classical categories of “tribal” life. Just what might the syntax of tribal language reveal about the dynamic of its culture? How did patterns of dress reflect social roles and hierarchies? In what ways did the group’s musical tradition reflect the values of its people? The degree to which these essential features of culture reflect the character of the community is equally relevant in tribal and suburban cultures. By giving explicit and frontal treatment to these aspects of culture, I fully intend to suggest that the arena of Woodville’s schools might well be just as complex and dynamic as the villages of Bali or the islands of Samoa.

By invoking the attribute of wealth I recognize the reality that disparities of economic attainment generate similar differentials of power, position and status within any society. The extent to which this differential existed certainly placed students and faculty at CDS within distinct and potentially opposing cultural frames. In order to survey the “structure” of social engagement at CDS (Lévi-Strauss, 1963), it was entirely reasonable to map this cultural fault line within the school. Finally, as this ethnographic study does focus on a school as opposed to a tribe or a fishing village, it would have been unthinkable to parse the repertoire of participants in the life of CDS without recognizing that learning was the chief concern of CDS as an institution. For this reason, the distinctly different intellectual and academic concerns of CDS faculty and students serve as the last nodal point of cultural activity which demonstrates the degree to which diverse

and even competing cultures came together during daily life at CDS. Specific details of this analysis follow, below.

Lines and Language

Immediately upon entry into conversation with a member of the Jewish studies faculty of CDS, one was struck by the immediate realization that something dramatic had happened to the English language. It had taken on a host of words that were never traditionally included in our notions of “the Queen’s English.” Words like “shabbos,” “kashrus” and “holov yisroel,” snippets of Modern Hebrew as well as verses of Bible and even Talmudic phrases wove seamlessly into everyday spoken language. During my initial interview with Rabbi Sanders, an important leader within the school who quickly became one of the most valuable informants for this study, he shared the following reflection about students at CDS:

How do you find the kids?

Sweet. Some of the nicest kids there are. But as a general rule, the masses are just not committed.

In what way?

B’foal, shmiras haMitzvos or dovenning, kashrus on any level... (In reality, observing the laws of Jewish practice or prayer, or the dietary laws on any level) there are some kids who are *shomer kashrus* (observe the dietary laws). There are different segments in the school. There are the Orthodox kids who are *shomer kashrus*, and some you know, *dovven* (pray regularly), but even then they are not really... a lot of them are not... this is generalizing obviously, are not that committed.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ This was one of the many places where informants include non-English language, either Hebrew, Aramaic or Yiddish, in the normal flow of their conversation. Throughout this work, I offer a phonetic transliteration followed by an English translation in parenthesis for the first use of a given term. The transliteration alone is used subsequently. In cases where a specific text is referenced, I cite it in transliterated Hebrew.

The interaction, above, mostly reflects Standard English usage with the substitution of Ashkenazi Hebrew and Yiddish to address specific ideas or activities (*dovnen* is the Yiddish word for prayer, and *shomer kashrus* designates a person who is observant of Jewish dietary laws). At the same time, the use of “*b’foal*” (meaning “but in reality” or “however, in practice”) represents the insertion of a disjunctive Hebrew phrase where an English word would have served just as well. It is a choice of words which went well beyond the selection of Hebrew phrases to express ideas that have unique meaning in that language. With this observation in hand, I suggest a clear pattern of three different kinds of “Jewish” language which the members of CDS employed.¹⁵⁵ The first was technical language (words used to express specifically Jewish ideas or concepts); the second was the substitution of Hebrew, Aramaic or Yiddish for English syntax or logical operators; the final and most sophisticated type of Jewish language involved a quotation from traditional texts such as the Bible or the Talmud. In this last case, the speaker presumed that his or her listener was sufficiently educated to be able to identify the meaning and contextual relevance of the larger source text which the speaker referenced.¹⁵⁶

While it is not the purpose of this work to conduct a linguistic study, some clear patterns did emerge. Based upon field observation in classroom settings, students were least likely to use Hebrew as part of their discourse, with the exception of technical

¹⁵⁵ Such language can include Hebrew spoken with a modern Israeli pronunciation, Hebrew spoken with an Ashkenazi or European sound pattern and corresponding phonemic conventions, Yiddish and even Aramaic in some expressions that derive from fifth century C.E. Talmudic literature.

¹⁵⁶ One example was Rabbi Oren’s assertion that in his contract negotiations, “yadi al ha’elyona.” The phrase, from the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Bava Kama, refers to a situation in which one side of a commercial transaction has advantageous leverage to conclude the deal on his terms.

language. This matched the quality of language use exhibited by parents.¹⁵⁷ Jewish studies faculty and administrators used a much higher degree of “Jewish language,” and these were the only informants who substituted non-English logical operators or syntax for Standard English usage. It was also clear that an adult informant’s level of ritual observance correlated to the kinds of language that he or she employed. Among students, there was no difference in language patterns observed based upon religious practice or communal affiliation. The net effect of this phenomenon was to shape two different lexicons that were operative within CDS, one belonging largely to students and their parents, the other reserved for the more learned or religious parents and faculty members. In between lay the kind of cultural contact point I argued above, replete with translation, with meaningful choices of language and the more than occasional act of code switching.¹⁵⁸ The importance of such choices, especially the act of code switching, (Cazden, 1987, 2001; Gee, 1990) makes an important statement about the existence of divergent cultural communities within CDS.

The work that scholars of education and culture have invested in studying the phenomenon of subculture and regional language (Heath, 1983) has prompted additional research into the phenomenon of Jewish language over the last decade. Although Gold (1985) was among the first to argue for a modern “Jewish English” dialect, Benor (2004, 2006, 2009 and jointly as Spolsky & Benor, 2006) has gone the furthest in exploring how

¹⁵⁷ In the transcript of a typical parent interview (identified in the source file as “Family 10 Transcript”), only five instances of Hebrew usage emerged across 500 lines of transcribed dialogue. Most of the language used consisted of words like *shul* or *bar mitzvah* that have actually entered the mainstream of modern American English.

¹⁵⁸ A simple but meaningful example of code switching emerged from observational notes of Rabbi Oren’s class on 5/11/2006, in which he switched from modern Israeli Hebrew to Yiddish linguistic conventions while teaching a Hebrew section from the Talmud. This pattern was repeated by another faculty member who, with great self awareness, corrected herself after using the Yiddish pronunciation for a specific book. Not only did she shift speech patterns, but added “oops, gotta remember I’m at Sha’arey!” See Friedman interview, lines 352-353.

the selection and adaptation of Jewish language has operated from Ottoman times and onward as a boundary marker which could be used to include or specifically exclude specific subjects from membership in community. Most striking for this work is Benor's study (2001) which treated the adoption of specific and unprecedented sound patterns among Jewish adults who had adopted new and more rigorous patterns of religious observance in their adult life. The present study's findings are aligned with Benor's, as it is evident that language patterns constitute a discernable fault line, one which both labeled and nuanced the difference between participants in the life of CDS.

Musical Harmony and Dissonance

If speech and choice of language offer a first glimpse into the dynamics of grouping and culture at CDS, then speech's first cousin, song, must surely be considered as well. Music has always played an important role in expressing cultural identity (Hall, 1997a), so it is no surprise that music held a distinctive place in the life of CDS. Sometimes the choice of music was formal, like the singing of Israel's national anthem, *haTikvah*, at the close of school-wide assembly to celebrate *Yom Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem Day).¹⁵⁹ On days of commemoration, like *Yom haZikaron* (Israeli Memorial Day), the selection of music might be muted or even mournful, like the plaintive violin music that served as the backdrop to an assembly honoring soldiers who had fallen in battle defending the State of Israel. At other times, the music was lighter, more jovial and more likely to be selected by students as opposed to faculty. An important feature of life in the Upper School of CDS was a regular Friday afternoon assembly that students planned and largely conducted. For the purpose of field work, these assemblies offered a

¹⁵⁹ In the modern Israeli calendar, this day marks the capture of Jerusalem and its return to Israeli sovereignty during the Six Day War.

reliable window into student perspectives on the culture of CDS. Since the assemblies were held in CDS's state-of-the-art auditorium, students had a professional PA system complete with stage lighting and a full range of audio-visual equipment. Most assemblies opened with some kind of music, and student video compositions were a regular feature. While screened and coordinated with the school administration, these student segments offered music of a much different genre, mostly rock, some American pop classics and a healthy dose of rhythm and blues. To be sure, no violin music was heard.

While it is easy to explain the difference between students' public representations of their own cultural tastes and the official cadences of the school's public institutional culture, I found that the private (as opposed to "institutional") musical choices of both students and faculty were much most telling. The following artifacts and records from field notes offer one such glimpse of both discontinuities and overlaps between the worlds of student and faculty culture.

Artifact #1: Faculty Music

During my stay at CDS I spent a tremendous amount of time in the Jewish Studies office, a place where Upper School religious studies faculty worked, often played and always got together to talk. In the entire school, this office was the one most reliable place for me to be able to take the pulse of the institution, at least through the eyes of its Jewish faculty. Whenever I visited, there was almost always music playing in the background, often streamed over the internet. One site, an Israeli media organization that is religiously moderate but staunchly conservative on other social and political issues, offered a "jukebox" of music on its web site, including the rather novel genre of "Hasidic rock." Just what does Hasidic rock sound like? Coursing drum beats and synthesizer set

the stage for a screaming electric guitar, which played off the following lyrics, drawn from the Biblical Book of Psalms. “*Ta’amu u’re’u ki tov haShem, ashrei haGever ye’heseh bo*” “Taste and see how good God is, the man who takes shelter in Him will be joyful.”¹⁶⁰

Artifact #2: Student Views of Faculty Music

One of the traditions of CDS was that each year, a group of graduating senior class members created a video which parodied the life and times of their school. While a small group of the ninety-student senior class actually filmed the video, nearly the whole class acted in various scenes, and many students had input to its script. In one rather sardonic moment, the student video portrayed a faculty member banging away clumsily at a piano, playing music similar to the religiously inspired tunes highlighted above. The clip closed with an awkward jolt as the piano upends, the song ground to a halt and the student body’s statement of musical tastes firmly, if not delicately, conveyed. So just what music do students listen to?

Artifact #3: Student Music

I always asked my students what they are listening to, especially when it can build relationships and close some of the distance that separated teacher from student. During the course of my year at CDS, Jeremy was one such student. He was smart but always kept a few steps distant from the ninth grade class I taught and its content, Rabbinic literature from the Second to the Sixteenth Centuries. One day, before class, I found him with earphones plugged in, and asked what he was listening to. He smiled, first in

¹⁶⁰ Psalms, 34:9.

appreciation, but then embarrassment, and told me that I probably wouldn't enjoy his musical tastes. "Try me" I offered. The next day, I found a disk in my faculty box, a mix of tracks from his favorite bands. It was quite a selection of bands, with names like "Fear Factory," "Children of Doom" and the like. One favorite was the song *Before I Forget*, by the band "Slipknot." The band used some of the same instruments as the Hasidic group. Just more of them. And a lot louder. As for the lyrics, there is little hope of comparison:

Stapled shut, inside an outside world and I'm
Sealed in tight, bizarre but right at home
Claustrophobic, closing in and I'm
Catastrophic, not again
I'm smeared across the page, and doused in gasoline
I wear you like a stain, yet I'm the one who's obscene...
(Jordison, Gray, Taylor, et al, 2004)

For the purpose of this study, I have no interest in judging the quality of this music or even delving in to what this kind of music might say about student culture at CDS. It is, however, important to note the obvious difference in worldview between students who choose to listen to this music and a faculty member who dials up Hasidic rock on the internet. One gets the sense of actors who share the same stage while performing very different plays.

Field notes: Meeting on Broadway

While not every student at CDS listened to the kind of heavy metal music that Jeremy favored, it was equally apparent that none of the students listened to Hasidic rock. In the realm of musical tastes, students and faculty largely expressed themselves and viewed themselves in different worlds. Yet sometimes, those worlds overlapped. Leah Feldman was a popular member of the Jewish studies faculty who taught a Bible class in

the upper school. Intense, committed and pleasantly maternal, she was another one of the faculty members who made a substantial contribution to this project by sharing many hours of her time during interviews. In addition, I spent considerable time in Leah's classroom, observing her and taking notes on the dynamics of her interactions with students. The "finale" to this string of musical notes and artifacts came during one such session. Leah was in the midst of a discussion about one of the Biblical matriarchs with her eleventh grade students when she picked up her head and seemed to grasp for a metaphor that would express the value of a life lived well. "Did any of you see the musical *Rent*? Do you remember the song...Seasons of Love?" A girl in the back row, one who had been ignoring the discussion while reviewing Spanish notes, suddenly piped up, "Oh, that's my favorite." "Same here," Leah replied, "it's in the car and we play it on the way to school. Dani (my son) knows almost all the words now." In this moment of shared appreciation, teacher and student had both reached across a gap to find mutual tastes and common interest by way of the student and teacher's shared appreciation for this one piece of music.

Without belaboring the point, it is fair to claim that music worked much like language at CDS. There were clear differences in the choices that students and faculty made as acts of cultural self-representation. By and large students and faculty made choices that were different, but as witnessed above, those choices could overlap on occasion in ways that helped create meaningful bonds between faculty and students. In the language of anthropological methodology that frames this study, choices of music reaffirmed both the reality of disjunctive cultural communities, as well as a more subtle exchange of some shared culture between both groups.

Wealth

Just as music offered one frame for understanding cultural boundaries within CDS, so did money. While this topic surfaced only rarely, it represented an important additional boundary in a school where faculty largely understood themselves to be “just getting by” or even poor. By contrast, the students at CDS seemed extremely privileged. While it is easy to measure wealth, getting access to those measures is complicated by the trappings of taboo that surround money and attitudes about material privilege. Instead, I offer firsthand observations and informant-disclosed data which present information that is even more important to a study of culture than net worth, that being the feelings and self understandings of the members of CDS.

Several pieces of evidence came to suggest a high level of actual wealth or perceived privilege on the part of students at CDS. Two observations from my field notes captured a proxy for financial means as measured by the cars that CDS students and their parents drove. From field Notes: “On the day of my observations, Lower school moms in the carpool lane of CDS pulled up driving a Sequoia, a Caravan, an Escalade...many of them new.” Around the other side of the building, in the student section of the Upper School parking lot, I paused one day to note the models of the cars that students drive. While there were a handful of Toyotas, Chryslers and Chevys, there also were a number of smaller SUVs. Then came the stars of the show, the BMWs. Acuras. Mercedes-Benz. My notes close with the following observation, “I can’t afford one of these!” Neither could the faculty, judging from the aging Fords and Hondas on their side of the lot.

While these physical objects represented a measure of prosperity, students' sense of their own privilege was even more important as an attribute of the culture of the school, one which demonstrated itself on several occasions during the course of my field work. While observing a Bible class early in the year, I noted the teacher's dialogue with her students about the idea of freedom of choice in life. The exchange was framed by the following question "If you have a housekeeper, does she have a choice to show up for work or not?" The student's answer ("no") was much less important than the general smirking and snickering that another teenage boy in the class offered as rejoinder. When the same class was asked to "give me a goal in life," the student who raised his hand first offered his desire to "become a successful businessman." How? "Make connections so that you can get a first job then work your way up the ladder..." While this offers limited evidence about the actual wealth of the students' families, it does suggest the degree to which these students have internalized a whole set of cultural assumptions about how the game of success in life is played. Student assumptions about economic privilege created a certain worldview which they displayed often enough to have registered in my field notes, as evidenced by the following interaction:

A group of students from the Senior class are studying Russian history. They cluster around a computer monitor, looking for programs that will allow them to take a study tour to Russia. They have found one tour that appears to be run by a Jewish organization. The student peering over the screen expresses surprise that the tour does not observe Shabbat. "Look, they arrived on Saturday. Then the next week they leave again on Saturday." Students continue talking about the cost of the trip, which (in 2005) was \$2,500. The male student who is hunched over the computer seems to express some hesitation about that number. Is it too high? A young woman wearing a black skirt, high heels and a long sleeved pink top shakes her head sideways and exclaims, "That's nothing! I know someone who just spent \$7,000 on a public school trip."

While it is difficult to pinpoint whether this degree of privilege was typical of all students in the school, the factor that is both more important while simultaneously easy to document from the tenor of public language is the degree to which privilege was assumed to be part of the experience of the normative CDS student. A series of public statements from a regular Friday assembly further confirmed the validity of the claim that privilege was an essential feature of school culture. On the particular day referenced in my field notes, students offered highlights describing a number of school-based clubs ranging from social action groups to a literary journal and even a philosophy club. A faculty member highlighted the availability of an internship at the National Aquarium that was secured using insider connections. Finally, a senior class member spoke about her internship during the past summer at Camp Koby, a project based in Israel to support young Israelis who were impacted by Palestinian terror attacks. The student spoke at length about how inclusive the program was in making sure that religious and non-religious kids participated together. She urged interested peers to pursue this opportunity for themselves during the coming summer. At the close of remarks she noted, “Oh, by the way, it’s in Israel...I almost forgot...” The comment was telling, as its speaker simply assumed that airfare and expenses for a summer in Israel were within reach—almost taken for granted—for her peers and their families. This was the second time in one week where I had seen students take wealth and the ability to travel internationally as a given in the lives of their peers.

The same sense of privilege did not exist for the faculty of CDS. To begin with, the faculty was not on the whole very well compensated. In one discussion, Rabbi Oren offered that his current position certainly “wasn’t the best offer” of those he received “but

it was (financially) doable.” Another faculty member shared that the entire reason he relocated to Woodville was its affordable cost of living, given that he earned so little as an educator. At one point, Mrs. Stein spoke with me regarding the limits of her budget and how it impacted the compensation packages she offered to faculty members. “No bargaining” was a core part of her philosophy, “I offer what I offer, then let them walk out. I hope they take it.”

In addition to the limited compensation they receive, many faculty members at CDS contended with two sociological factors which limited their financial means even further. In one hand, a number of staff members were young educators, a few just out of professional training programs or religious seminaries.¹⁶¹ Older staff members tended to have multiple children in accordance with the social mores of the black hat Orthodox community,¹⁶² a choice which put obvious financial strain on those families. Indeed, having children was so cherished within the Orthodox Jewish community that an inability to have large families was experienced as a failure and even a crisis of identity for women within this community. One segment of field notes from Leah Feldman’s Bible class made this evident.

In the Bible, all women, and today, I would argue, most women, see their role in the world is to have children. I’ve seen people who won’t go to schul because this one’s in maternity clothing and that one is announcing she’s expecting. “Give me a child or else I am dead.” That’s her sole purpose as a woman.

¹⁶¹ See field notes from 5/23/2006. Note observations from the classroom teaching of one such faculty member in field notes from 9/26/2005.

¹⁶² This fact was noted strikingly in my field notes. On 10/31/2005, I joined the staff of CDS to participate in a professional development seminar that was attended by teachers from some of the most religiously observant institutions in the community. On approaching the school which sponsored this day long seminar, I was struck by the parking lot, which was filled to capacity with large, multi-passenger vans. Most of the women attending drove vehicles which seated nine, sometimes up to fifteen, passengers so that they might carpool their children.

This combination of large families and small incomes had a dramatic impact on several members of the religious studies faculty. One staff member, Rabbi Pearl, shared that he was only able to teach at CDS because the job provided tuition subsidies for his children's nursery school enrollment.¹⁶³ The same individual commented multiple times during the year of my field work regarding not just the financial privations of teaching at CDS, but of the palpable distance that he felt from his students due to the gap between his level of income and theirs.

“[Students] come to my house to visit, and I'm embarrassed. My floors aren't finished, stuff needs to be done on the house. And if I had the extra money I would put it in an IRA, not the house...socio-economically I live in a different world from my students.

In any school, it is not surprising to find narrative surrounding wealth. While Kozol (1991) is noted for shining a bright light on the relationship between privilege and wealth in larger policy literature, Peshkin's field work (2001) addressed a question closer to the one that exists at CDS, problematizing wealth as a cultural dividing line.

At CDS, lines of wealth acted as a double-marker of separate identities. I have already documented the differences in position and status that wealth conferred at CDS. One finds a more subtle division at CDS as well, created by the religious and sociological fact that many men in the Black Hat Orthodox world gave such a great priority to Torah study that their ideal was not to work at all, reserving all of their time for religious study. One faculty member spoke with pride of the fact that his adult male children spent the majority of their time studying Torah instead of working to earn an income.¹⁶⁴ While this

¹⁶³ Other faculty members found ways to support teaching by earning other incomes outside of school. One important staff member, Rabbi Fine, brought great devotion to his teaching work but earned the bulk of his actual income through a brokerage business that he ran independently.

¹⁶⁴ This specific case reflects broader patterns within the black hat world that Stadler (2009) described as the denunciation of work in favor of Torah study.

was seen as a noble choice by the most observant Jews, the financial strains that this lifestyle creates is met with suspicion and even significant alarm in other parts of the Jewish community. Rabbi Lander, a religiously observant but ideologically moderate parent, spent part of our interview criticizing the religious ideology of the “right wing” or Black Hat community that, in his words, was going to “self destruct financially.”¹⁶⁵ Accordingly, the differential of wealth between faculty and student families represented both a difference in material privilege as well as well as a marker for other, deeper ideological divergence between these two groups as reflected in attitudes ranging from the value of work to the importance (or evils) of secular education. Given these additional overlays, the rift that wealth came to represent was deep and palpable enough to the faculty that multiple individuals raised this issue during the course of field work.¹⁶⁶ It was just another one of the cultural fault lines that made the interplay of communities at CDS so fascinating.

Dressing for Success

While differential access to wealth offered both a real socio-economic dividing line as well as a proxy for religious and ideological differences at CDS, the issue of wealth often lay under wraps. By contrast, differences in choices of dress were always evident and offered a powerful reminder of the cultural diversity of CDS on a daily basis. After even a short amount of time at CDS, it soon became apparent that various members of the community wore a kind of “uniform” which at times affirmed, sometimes

¹⁶⁵ Lerner interview, lines 537-549.

¹⁶⁶ Mrs. Stein confessed both sensitivity to the role of wealth as a social status marker as well as a deliberate agenda of countering non-Orthodox stereotypes that she felt were directed towards members of her community. In her words, “I send the message that *frum* (religiously observant) and *schleppy* (déclassé) are not synonymous. I’ve devoted my life to that mantra.”

distinguished and on occasion even blended the identities of different groups within the school. Like music and language, the boundaries created by choice of dress were far from distinct, replete with both patterns of separateness as well as overlap between different members of the CDS faculty and student body. As such, the continuum of dress at CDS offered another compelling basis for the notion that the school brought individuals with different cultural habits and assumptions into contact with one another...and into conflict as well.

At the opening meeting of Jewish Studies faculty, the Senior Rabbi of Sha'arey paid a visit to the faculty. Rabbi Warren rarely intruded on the daily operation of the school, and this visit at the start of the school year was meant to set the tenor for the coming year with faculty. The previous Saturday evening, the synagogue hosted a program for high school age members of the school, and both teachers as well as students turned out in support. While the post-Shabbat "battle of the bands" program was a huge success, it seems that only four students remained to join the congregation for the *selichot* prayers that observant Jews recite before the holiday of *Rosh haShanah* (the Jewish New Year). With a gleam in his eye, Rabbi Warren noted "the students were certainly present, and wearing *their* uniforms." With a laugh and a pained look on his face, Rabbi Fine retorted, "Well, (the uniforms were) not much..." With a sympathetic nod, Rabbi Warren replied, "Rabbi Fine, I sympathize with all (the immodesty) that you have to put up with working here! You definitely have a place in the world to come." The openness with which the school's rabbis and teachers engaged in this discussion took me by surprise for how much it revealed about the potential for disconnect between faculty and students. Faculty, it seems, were pious. Students largely were not. Faculty largely

dressed modestly. Students dressed provocatively. Most poignant was the acknowledgement that, for an extremely devout rabbi, there might be some inner conflict about working each day with scantily clad teenagers, enough to merit “a place in (heaven)” as reward for putting up with all the bother that it took to cross these bridges and boundaries.

So just where did the boundary lie, that point of cultural contact that I was seeking at CDS? Inasmuch as dress helps sketch the border lines, it will help to begin with a description of how teachers and students dress. Despite jokes about “uniforms,” the notion seemed to fit CDS very well, as both faculty and student choices of clothing were quite distinctive. For observant Jewish faculty, there was indeed a set outfit. Males wore suits or slacks, almost always black, accompanied by a white shirt and a range of ties. While there were exceptions to this pattern of “black on white,” they seemed to underscore the rule that members of the observant, right wing Orthodox or “Black Hat” community largely adopted this sartorial code. Ideologically moderate or non-Jewish males were the few who broke this pattern, though still selecting attire that would be seen as “formal” in other schools such as khaki pants, ties and sport-coats. The one additional fashion object which rounded out the traditional male’s outfit was a *kippah*¹⁶⁷ or head covering, again black, and usually made of velvet or black leather. Here, as well, men choose between a number of styles, each of which telegraphed belonging to one of the different sub-communities within the Orthodox world.

Stitched or knitted *kippot* indicated membership in a subset of the community which was moderately observant, Zionist and tended to engage secular culture more than

¹⁶⁷ *Kippot*, in the plural. This item of clothing is often referred to as a *yarmulkah*, as well.

others. The black knitted or leather *kippot* flagged wearers as more religiously than politically supportive of the State of Israel, cooler in their appreciation of modern cultural pursuits, but more rigorous in adhering to the details of Jewish ritual life. Finally, those who wore black velvet *kippot* were mostly members of communities which kept secular culture at arm's length, were on occasion ambivalent about the modern State of Israel, embraced a strict separation between genders and gravitated towards increasingly strict interpretations of Jewish law and practice (Soloveitchik, 1994).¹⁶⁸ As I note, below, members of the CDS faculty paid enough attention to these symbols to not only re-affirm but also enforce the underlying codes of dress which maintained the power of these various objects to designate membership in differing cultural communities.

For women, black remained a kind of touchstone color, depending upon the occasion or degree of religious piety of an individual household. In general, the more conservative or religiously right wing women dressed in black or dark colored clothing as a sign of modesty and piety. Skirts or dresses of the more religiously conservative faculty members were always long enough to reach their ankles, and women never wore pants, as that would call undue attention to their bodies. Similarly, more observant women exclusively wore long sleeved shirts or blouses whose neck-lines were as high as their skirts were long. A final cultural practice that was unique to the orthodox Jewish community is that married women covered their hair with a hat, a kerchief or even a wig, again as a sign of modesty and a statement that the entirety of their physical beauty or sexual identity was reserved for their husbands.¹⁶⁹ As with the male faculty, there was

¹⁶⁸ Also see Interview-Family #2 lines 50-58 for a more detailed description of the trend towards more intense expressions of religious piety in the Woodville community.

¹⁶⁹ It is not the purpose of this work to dwell at length on the origins of this pattern of modest dress within the black hat or Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. For a fuller description of the mores and habits of one

some amount of variability. Non-Jewish women as well as the minority of the Jewish faculty who espoused more liberal ideological stances dressed modestly and professionally, but in more varied hues. Some wore skirts but did not cover their hair, while one lone staff member wore pantsuits as well as the traditional, male *kippah* as a statement of her own non-Orthodox orientation. In the end, this limited diversity of dress stood in clear contrast to the norms which governed religious faculty.

Students came to school each day in clothing that was, quite literally, uniform. Khaki or navy pants and skirts were expected of all students, with polo shirts bearing the CDS logo on top. While *kippot* were required of all male students at all times, a range of designs and styles were in evidence. One lone female student wore an elegant, woven headcovering during Jewish text classes and prayers as a statement of both her feminist principles and personal religious commitments. On the whole, students looked neat, well dressed and exactly what one would expect from an exclusive prep-school. Apparently, it was not always this way.

“And you came after the dress code!” Aviva Adler, a beloved teacher in the Jewish Studies department emphatically reminded me that the prim and preppy outfits I saw on a day to day basis were a very new phenomenon at CDS. What came before was described in a quip by the High School Principal that multiple faculty repeated to me as a description of the “fashion scene” at CDS in prior years. “There was a lot of nudity in this school...” Oren, an affable and very pious staff member, described “Cleavage

part of this community, see works by L. Harris (1995) and Heilman (1992) as well as Waxman (1998, 2004) and Stadler (2009).

down to here,” motioning to the center of his chest.¹⁷⁰ In Adler’s words, “Before a dress code, clothing was an uncomfortable distraction. I don’t like knowing what color a student’s underwear was, or their bras or what else... I saw more skin than I ever wanted to.” The new dress code was launched just as I arrived, and apparently still needed a bit of reinforcement. At the parents’ open house assembly during the first month of the academic year, Rabbi Warren addressed assembled parents and students and reflected that at first “I wanted you to be able to express your own individuality...just like the kids at Woodville (a local public school)...but then, things started looking...skuzzy (the kids laugh), just like the kids at Woodville.”¹⁷¹ As I glanced around the room, I finally got to see what CDS students looked like in comparison to their parents. The parents’ dress was casual but neat, and it was certainly no surprise to find parents dressed more formally than their children. The real comparison came when viewing the parents’ choice of clothing in contrast to faculty. Almost 60% of the men covered their heads in some way, many out of deference to school policy. Few of the women sported any of the traditional clothing that connoted membership in the Black Hat community. Most wore pants and only two women out of a parent body of several hundred covered their heads. It was one more reminder that students and faculty brought radically different cultural baggage to their encounters with one another.

For many of the faculty, these differences created a palpable sense of alienation from the children they taught. Rabbi Sanders, many months after the school’s open

¹⁷⁰ According to Oren, “Just as long as you were covering, cleavage was *mekubal* (acceptable), navels were *mekubal*...for a kid to come in it (only) had to be that in some way of sitting, her naval was covered...and if she stretches it goes up to her *pupik* (Yiddish for navel).”

¹⁷¹ Rabbi Warren address during Fall Open House, 9/14/2005. On the occasional dress-down day, I got to see how students dressed when left to their own devices. By the end of the year, students threw off the dress code entirely during the last week of exams, showing up in shorts, ripped jeans, males with bare heads and your women sporting and a range of revealing outerwear that fit Adler and Oren’s description.

house, mentioned his frustration at CDS parents for not showing appropriate deference to the school dress code. In his words, “there are lots of kids who don’t do anything remotely Jewish. You know, *tarfus* (non-kosher food) in the building if you don’t stop it. And their parents...I remember the first shocker is that the parent wouldn’t even think about putting on a *yarmulke* when walking into the building.” Oren’s comment was striking, as he does not just focus on dress per-se, but goes on to describe dress in relation to other ritual choices. At least in his own mind, dress signified larger and more complicated issues which were interrelated, a symbolic connection that I will address further, below.

Rabbi Warren’s comment to Rabbi Fine, above, commended him for putting up with the prior, “immodest” atmosphere at CDS. For devoutly religious Jews, choices about dress were not merely aesthetic, but rather involved fundamental issues of self-definition. As Adler noted, “It became hard ... for Judaics teachers, because for us... we had an instant reaction to (immodest dress.)” One faculty member even went to his Rabbi to ask for permission in the form of a Rabbinic dispensation in order to accept a job offer at CDS. Even for non religious faculty, the constant need to re-assert and defend the limits of school dress code sometimes became an annoying strain on otherwise good relations with students.¹⁷²

The root of this problem lay in the fact that systems of dress are far more powerful than what they cover or, in the case of CDS students, leave assertively bare. To begin with, dress is rarely neutral. More commonly, it becomes abstracted to the point

¹⁷² At the height of the dress-code battles Harriet Silverman, the school guidance counselor, became the arbiter of blouses and skirt lengths, a role she soon tired of holding. Snippets of resentment showed in her address to students in advance of a dress-down field day. Silverman announced that students were allowed to wear shorts for outdoor activity with the caveat that “You ALL know what appropriate length means!”

that simple garments take on the symbolic weight of larger political or social messages (Hall, 1997a). Others, like Barthes, argue that the interpenetrating sub-structures of costume, group boundaries, ideology and ritual systems reinforce one another to transform mere clothing from physical object into overt symbol and, finally into a cultural signifier (Barthes, 1972). As cultural signifiers, garments (or even colors) come to suggest loyalties, evoke agendas and feed the notion of *communitas*. In the case of CDS, the power of dress to act as a signifier of group membership is made clear by Oren's comment above. In his view, dress was merely one facet of a commitment or disregard for a set of religious norms that governed his life, permeated his communal involvements and otherwise created a totalizing picture of who he was in the universe. In this context, differences of dress at CDS had the potential to remind community members of fundamental differences that relegated staff and students to profoundly different subcultures within the Jewish community.

Just as faculty sometimes expressed difficulty negotiating the boundaries that student dress signified, students also evidenced alienation or discomfort with some faculty based upon their choice of dress. Rabbi Fine discovered how complicated it could be to form relationships with students when he first arrived at the school. Fine is of medium height and wears the uniform of a Black Hat Orthodox Jewish male as his daily attire. In addition to the black suit and white shirt, his face is framed by a long white beard and *peyos* (sidelocks). Even as he pursued relationships with his students, at first he found a host of barriers.

My appearance was somewhat put-offish. I mean, I look where I come from, and I carry a certain persona. The age, the fact that the beard is white. And, um, the black suit and the *peyos* don't help... I think the kids felt there was a wall there. And that they...they had to be respectful to a

fault. I saw that it would be difficult to have a companionship relationship with them.

While Fine ultimately broke through and became one of the more beloved members of the CDS staff, it was only after overcoming the initial skepticism of students who equated his “uniform” with a lack of openness or respect for non-Orthodox students. Adler also reported a strong tendency on the part of some students pre-judge her based upon her choice of dress. While Adler was one of the most liberal faculty members when it came to student self-expression, a strong advocate of effective sex education and a sponsor of the school’s participation in World AIDS day, she was still viewed with initial skepticism by many non-Orthodox students. “It’s not like word gets across...that I’m open to conversation...I am kind of pigeon holed into an Orthodox perspective, because that’s how they see the world. The world is that I cover my hair and wear skirts.” Rabbi Oren also expressed a clear feeling that he was judged by his appearance or even stigmatized by the Black Hat outfit. In an environment where CDS faculty and students could have profound disagreements of belief, Rabbi Pearl once quipped that he often preferred to work in public schools since there, the students “don’t know they are supposed to hate you.”

Even though Pearl’s comment represents an obvious exaggeration, it should be taken together with several triangulating pieces of data which suggest that students certainly did make assumptions or judgments about faculty based upon their dress. While much of the field data that I brought, above, records faculty impressions or adult interpretations of student perspectives, my field notes also captured student voices on this topic. Linda Bernstein, a Junior at CDS (and the only female student to cover her head during prayer and study), was a tremendous skeptic and openly questioned aspects of

Jewish life and practice that appeared unreasonable or contradictory to her. During one Jewish History class that I observed, she made a point of skewering “Hasidic Jews who dress (in black coats) like Polish nobles” for the anachronistic and even inauthentic nature of this tradition as a “Jewish” practice. At other times, students weighed in on the Black Hat community’s dress code with a bit more humor, though no more subtlety. For several years, Seniors at CDS had produced a student film gently lampooning the school as part of their graduation week festivities. This year’s film opened with an animated interlude featuring characters drawn from the daily life of CDS. One character represented the High School Principal, another Mrs. Stein, a favorite history teacher and finally Rabbi Fine. He was portrayed in the skit as a short man wearing a long white beard and a red suite. In a rather brazen act of cultural reversal, CDS students had transformed this Black Hat, Orthodox Jew into Santa Claus. The skit screened amidst whoops and cheers from the CDS student body.

The field notes that my work yielded suggest a vigorous understanding of the power of clothing to shape and represent identity. In the case of Linda Bernstein’s jab at Jews dressed as “Polish aristocracy,” it is likely that this comment gained part of its compelling quality from the fact that it was subversive of norms that Bernstein perceived as being taken for granted. The case of Fine’s transformation from black suited rabbi into Santa Clause was another case in which the student body clearly understood that the particular outfit which Rabbi Fine chose to wear was not just accidental but, rather, representational, such that the move to portray him in a red suite and cap took deliberate aim at a set of religious conventions which Rabbi Fine, by his very presence in the school, was meant to defend. While this state of wardrobe-as-cultural-signifier was

immediately evident, there was one added layer of meaning to dress within CDS that my field research supports, as well.

Three important qualities of group-bound cultural tropes include the fact that that they are viewed as legitimate by group members, they are perpetuated broadly and finally their adherents enforce and defend the legitimacy of these cultural tropes as orienting markers of identity and belonging. Hall (1997b) would describe this defense of signifying systems as the use of cultural power in the sense of Gramsci, a theoretical approach that aligns strongly with Wenger's (1998) argument that dominant cultural actors reify specific patterns of behavior, declaring them to be legitimate and empowering the younger cultural apprentices who will adopt reified patterns if they seek complete inclusion in their cultural milieu. Each of these conditions appears true for the religiously anchored identity tropes which regulated dress at CDS.

To begin with, uniformity of dress was clearly viewed as important by members of the Black Hat community who bore this iconic label and look. When asked about his religious community, Rabbi Oren replied with a succinct answer. "I *dovven* (pray daily) at Hevre Shas, (the name of his synagogue). When asked to describe that synagogue and community, he replied that "it's definitely, for lack of a better term, Black Hat."¹⁷³ The same language was echoed by Mrs. Stein when I pressed her to describe essential features of her staff hires. Reflecting on their shared religious ideology, Stein offered the following:

¹⁷³ Pressed further, Rabbi Sanders added "I guess you can judge it from where they send their kids to school. 99.9% of the *mispallelim* (worshippers), send their kids to Bais Yaakov, or to TA." This further reinforces the sense that a specific set of attire, congregational affiliation and schooling overlap to form what Strike describes as a "thick community" (Strike, 2003, 2004).

Rabbi (Warren) would accuse me of blackifying the school, no question. As far as he's concerned, I've blackened the school...

You mean more *yeshivishe*...(educated in ultra Orthodox seminaries)? (disagreeing) (Dressed in) black. Because the "black" people that I choose are necessarily *yeshivishe* (educated in right wing Orthodox seminaries)...

Black Hat people...?

Yes. You know, *shachor* (the Hebrew word for black).¹⁷⁴

Here the label "black" referenced not only a teacher's educational training in the yeshivah world but also a basic set of ideological commitments and finally a clear external uniform. The comments of informants who themselves lived in the Black Hat world were striking as they suggested that this way of thinking about the coded messages of dress and social boundaries was both transparent and legitimate to community insiders.

Deliberately or not, the faculty of CDS generated messages that inscribed (Geertz, 1973; Hall, 1980) the normativity of the Black Hat dress code as a valid cultural marker on multiple occasions. One of the general student assemblies held during the year commemorated *Yom Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem day), the anniversary of Jerusalem's return to Jewish political sovereignty after its capture during the Six Day War. A moving video presentation transmitted from Israel began the assembly. Despite the fact that the majority of soldiers who fought to capture Jerusalem from Jordanian control in 1967 were secular, non-religious Israelis, the narrators and talking heads interviewed for the film clip were overwhelmingly members of the Black Hat community, clad in its signature outfit of white shirts and black jackets for males, subdued colors and full head covering for women. While not the overt intent of the staff, this presentation was simply one more opportunity for students to link associations of Israel, a central symbol of both

¹⁷⁴ Stein interview, lines 287-296. For additional and triangulating evidence of this usage, see Family #2 interview, line 66.

the school and the modern Jewish world, with one particular faction of the Jewish people as a whole. In essence, the sub-text of the presentation was the argument that the Black Hat community, a numerical minority of Jews worldwide, should be seen as normative representatives of Jewish life and culture.

Another powerful moment within my own ethnographic research rendered this act of cultural representation even clearer. While walking down the hall one day during the spring semester, I came across a poster with pictures of a family celebrating rituals of the Passover *seder* (the ritual Passover meal) at home. The table was perfectly set. The mother of the family beamed as neatly dressed children sat around her and her husband, singing songs and prayers. Each sported a gleaming black *kippah* that looked a little too glossy to match the rest of the picture. Curious about the poster, I returned two days later to view the same photos from multiple angles. Perplexed, I finally took a sharp object to the posters and scratched, revealing exactly what had taken place. Originally, the poster showed a group of children wearing knitted *kippot*, the signature symbol of a competing community with a more liberal religious and political ideology. Someone had taken a black permanent marker and retouched the poster before hanging it in the hallway. In the context of contested labels and purposeful attempts to legitimate one group over the other, I recorded this as a deliberate act of cultural alchemy, at best. Someone had erased the external cultural markers of the Modern Orthodox world and replaced them with the uniform of the Black Hat community.

While this example shows the Black Hat community's concern for propagating the set of cultural references that legitimate the community's code of dress, it could just as easily convey the community's desire to defend and enforce cultural boundaries. This

tendency to enforce cultural norms surrounding dress also surfaced during the course of my field work at CDS. Adler, the instructor who expressed annoyance that her students defined her by her clothing, nonetheless went out of her way to dress to fit the parameters of this group. When pressed on this point, she replied quite simply that “the uniform is part of being in the community.” At another point in the year, I met a group of young women who had just interviewed with the representative of Machon Gold, a post high school seminary for young women, located in Israel.¹⁷⁵ Laughing, they described some of the questions that the seminary’s representative asked them, including, “Do you normally wear skirts? Does your sister?” Again, it seems that clothing was deliberately used as a mark of membership in the Black Hat community, so much so that students who “wear the wrong outfit” were not-so-subtly discouraged from applying to this particular institution. Feldman confirmed my impression that failing to wear the correct uniform might have negative consequences in other parts of the Black Hat world. While expressing that she did not see anything inappropriate with women not wearing dresses or skirts, she nonetheless feared social and professional ostracism if she made that choice.

In her words:

I have a certain role, an agenda that I want to play in (this) community...and I can’t do that if I wear pants.

What will happen?

I won’t be respected as a religious person.

Even at CDS?

Not among the kids, but among the Judaic faculty, if I wore pants, I don’t think I would be respected. Absolutely.

Adler and Feldman’s comment offer three important lessons about life at CDS.

First, their comments make it clear that some significant portion of the faculty brought a

¹⁷⁵ See the Machon Gold web site, currently accessible at: <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/study/hadracha/gold.html>.

highly charged set of cultural assumptions, replete with specific limits and relational boundaries that even devolved to details as discrete as hem lines. Second, there was definitely a sense among insiders that the community could impose penalties for disregarding this dress code. Finally, Feldman's comment suggests that while some number of students either understood or accepted these boundaries, they were implausible and even non-existent for the bulk of CDS students.

As I argued, above, the legitimation, perpetuation and outright enforcement of dress as a cultural signifier helps substantiate the claim that clothing forms a valid fault line which differentiated cultural groups within the school. A combination of many faculty members' strict adherence to a particular dress code, combined with the fact that students largely embraced a radically different mode of dress certainly adds to the claim that CDS may be viewed as an ethnographic contact point. Two different groups, each with radically different norms, appeared to dwell under the same roof, and both were inclined to make cursory judgments of the other.

Against that backdrop, there were still moments in which faculty and students deliberately crossed over boundaries of dress. While none of the student body at CDS came from the Black Hat world, a number of young men chose to cover their heads even out of school, and a small percentage of young women each year adopted the skirts and long sleeves that were part of the signature "uniform" of Woodville's observant community. Students were not the only members of the CDS community who bridged the cultural divide. Mrs. Stein, whose shoes and snappy outfits were generally noted as a defining feature of her personality, reflected on her own choice of dress as part of a deliberate attempt to not "look the part" of a woman from the Black Hat community,

even though she called that community her home. The same applied to her faculty choices, who she expected to transition between cultures well enough that they “look and sound normal” to CDS students. During my interview with Rabbi Warren, he reflected quite honestly on the philosophy behind his tailored suits, his bold ties and even his choice of car, all designed to show that a modern person could live a religious life. As if to make the point even sharper, his cell phone interrupted the first part of our interview with an unexpected ring-tone, the chorus of the rock band Steppenwolf’s 1969 song, “Born to Be Wild.” Though forceful about his religious commitments, Rabbi Warren defied convention by planting at least one of his feet in the modern world.

Knowledge and Power

The final set of cultural attributes that calls attention to the nature of CDS as a cultural contact point revolves around the most basic aspect of life in school, that being the act of learning. As I soon came to appreciate, the meaning of learning and even the value of knowledge held very different meanings for students and faculty.

Among the black hat faculty, there was a very intense reverence for textual learning. During a visit to one faculty member’s home, he proudly asked his child to name all of the weekly sections of the Torah. The child grinned and proceeded to name each and every section of the Torah, in Hebrew, by memory. He was in second grade. This intense devotion to Jewish text was reflected by older faculty members on a daily basis. One colleague who sat near my desk in the faculty lounge constantly had a Hebrew Bible open, and during free time he would review the current selection from the weekly cycle of Torah readings multiple times over, in keeping with a religious dictate that one must study the weekly portion three times before the end of the week. This was

only one sign of the faculty's devotion to Jewish learning, but it was representative of much larger patterns that were prevalent within the black hat community. Within this world, the value of Torah study was so elevated that there was even a special term for the notion of studying *lish'mah* for the inherent sake of growing deeper in sacred knowledge, with no desire to make any practical application of this at all.

At the same time, students showed a much different attitude towards the enterprise of learning. The "hard text" classes that the black hat rabbis considered essential to authentic learning were often thinly enrolled in areas where students had elective choice. Faculty described how difficult it was to draw students into more weighty classes like the study of Talmud. At the same time, faculty grappled with content that would be sufficiently interesting to inspire the attention of their students. Among the most successful classes was a course that broadly addressed issues of intimacy and sexuality within a Jewish framework. The fact that a CDS instructor had succeeded in creating a framework for students to study these issues in a course that offered a healthy dose of Jewish text was seen by all faculty as a model that others should embrace and replicate. At the same time, it illustrates how much effort was required to bring faculty and students into a shared intellectual discussion.

At some points, students voiced a lack of interest in Judaic studies, ranging from more passive examples such as the students who sat studying Spanish in the back row of their Bible classes to the student who loudly protested a visit to a religious institution during mid-terms. "I have real work to do," she protested. Far from an attitude towards Jewish text that was *lish'mah*, this student saw the religious curriculum of CDS as

peripheral to her own purposes in attending the school, which had much to do with securing admission to a well respected college.

This range of alignments or disjuncture between faculty and students was also evident in their approach to general, secular knowledge. Some students were devoted to history or literature, as evidenced by the outside research or artistic writing that they engaged in. Others viewed the general studies curriculum in more instrumental terms, perhaps as a ticket to college. While this would not be exceptional in any American high school, it contrasted with the faculty's occasional distrust or even rejection of secular knowledge. While the larger disagreement in the Orthodox world regarding the value of secular education is well framed by Berkovitz (2002), the students of CDS were not mature enough to approach the epistemological questions of whether secular knowledge conveyed religiously valuable truths about the nature of God's world. Instead, more basic questions came to the forefront. At one point, faculty members argued over the question of whether secular scholarship or traditional religious sources offered an accurate description of Jewish history.

Perhaps the clearest example of this divide emerged with respect to the question of creation and evolution, an issue that (to the puzzlement of their students) many faculty members described as "a problem." Others refused to even broach the issue, lest they open the door to an idea that would contradict traditional notions that the world was created some 5765 years prior to my field research. My field notes record a conversation in which one female student entered the office of the school's learning resource coordinator to review some tutoring work. On the way out, she asked if it was really, scientifically true that men had one fewer rib than women, since the Book of Genesis

describes the creation of Eve using a rib taken from Adam's side. The teacher calmly smiled, shook her head and offered the authoritative pronouncement that "no, men and women have the same number of ribs." The student blanched slightly, then returned to her Bible class. It was just one more example of the different worlds that came in to contact at CDS.

Framing Cultural Interactions

At the start of this section, I argued that we should draw upon the anthropological construct of a cultural contact point as an initial framework for decoding the interactions of students and faculty. Based upon specific data about the differential use of language, disparate choices of music, gaps in wealth and radically different codes of dress which guided many students and faculty members, there is evidence of a high degree of cultural separation between these two communities. The existence of those differences, as well as the power of those differences to include or exclude individuals from group membership, render the claim of cultural contact point fully credible. Still, there are some unique features which were specific to CDS. Unlike Thompson's description of the Maori, this cultural setting was replete with actors who did two things that natives and colonizers rarely attempted. First, there was both dialogue and even cultural boundary crossing between the faculty and students whose culture governed day to day life at CDS. Second, all parties made a deliberate effort to coexist. As part of that effort, students and faculty had to negotiate disparate approaches to communal and ritual practices. They inevitably came to grips with the experience of both inclusion and exclusion. And on occasion, they even reached out to form mentoring relationships that had a powerful impact on both the

student and faculty members involved. The next section of this chapter addresses the first of these challenges.

Negotiating Ritual Boundaries

The differences of cultural orientation which separated CDS faculty and students would be interesting but ultimately irrelevant if they never came in to contact. In such a case, they would pass unnoticed as individuals who lacked any meaningful connection with one another went about the details of their daily life. At CDS, just the opposite occurred. Students and teachers spent their entire days interacting, and most students would spend more time with their teachers and peers than their parents on any given week. CDS, like any functional community, had to answer some of the fundamental questions that govern daily life. How shall we spend our time? What shall we eat? What norms govern the expression of intimacy? These and a host of other seemingly minor concerns ultimately become the basis of culture. It is no surprise that CDS faculty and students offered very different answers to each of these questions. One would expect this in most schools. Still, one additional feature of Jewish life made CDS unique. At CDS, faculty overwhelmingly looked to a tradition of Jewish ritual practice that offered a very detailed set of guidelines regarding sacred time, permissible or forbidden foods and even detailed boundaries regarding physical intimacy. Each of these behaviors was ritualized, and thus imbued with overlays of either sanctity or prohibition. The result was that seemingly mundane questions like “when may work be done” or “what food is served” could take on very powerful religious and cultural meaning, especially when the most important participants in the life of CDS disagreed about the legitimacy of the rituals which framed daily life. Before offering detailed field observations about how

these boundaries of ritual were negotiated, I begin by addressing the core question of why ritual matters and how it overlay the experiences of individuals at CDS.

Ritual is a crucial category of human endeavor, a rich language which enables people to communicate their needs, desires and corporate expectations (Driver, 1991).¹⁷⁶ While ritual is also used in religious settings, this basic act of human expression need not be “religious” in any formal or liturgical sense. One particularly powerful feature of ritual is that it allows communities to mark phases of life transition and alteration of status within the group. Ritual plays a critical role in communities by declaring who is “in” the group or who is “out,” who is beginning training and who has achieved the status of master (Turner, 1977, 1982). Such rituals make social life meaningful and coherent for members of a community by creating shared expectations about how to voice individual human concerns among similarly oriented peers (Douglas, 1970 & Strike, 2003). As such, it behooves us to view ritual not as “something that people do,” but rather, as a detailed and often un-spoken language which communicates deeply and with stunning efficacy.

Classrooms are also deeply ritualized spaces. We might be quick to identify the Pledge of Allegiance as a ritual act which “inscribes” the value of obedience and loyalty to the United States (Cossentino, 2004). Still, it would be a mistake to overlook other classroom rituals that teach obedience and respect for law as part of the school’s “hidden

¹⁷⁶ Driver’s (1991) work revealed the ubiquity of ritual and the critical nature of ritual languages, even in societies that see themselves as “modern” or “secular.” Consider, for example, the New Year’s Eve party, which Driver treated at great length. The frivolity of this celebration, marked by sartorial, culinary and artistic performance, expresses critical notions of social order, which is dissolved and then re-constituted annually. Beyond intoxication and silly hats, Driver’s reading of the New Year revealed a ritual performance that deliberately allowed for controlled excess as a way of authorizing deeper, enduring social and moral codes.

curriculum” (Apple, 1990).¹⁷⁷ Taking attendance, lining up children for recess, distributing hall passes and even conventions for calling upon children in class¹⁷⁸ all constitute ritualized acts which teach the learner what kind of person the school “expects them to be” (Ellsworth, 1997).

While some contemporary curriculum theorists have problematized the role of religious ritual in schooling (Webber, 2004), others suggest that the classroom is an essential forum for cultivating moral values (Ingall, 1999; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman; van Manen, 2002). Within the Jewish day school, the treatment of ritual is both foundational and deliberate (Fox, Scheffler & Marom, 2003). The school day often begins with Hebrew prayers, children recite blessings before and after eating, and in some Jewish schools, even patterns of dress may conform to the dictates of religious tradition. Concern for ritual is deeply integrated into the “formal” curriculum of schooling on several levels. Depending upon their age and the religious/philosophical orientation of their school, day school students might receive explicit lessons regarding how to perform certain ritual practices and might even study medieval legal codes which describe ritualized behavioral norms in astounding detail. CDS was no different, and indeed, a large body of my field work offered examples which rendered CDS as a very heavily ritualized space.

¹⁷⁷ By contrast, note Ravitch (1974, 2002) who argued against the very existence of “hidden curriculum” as a valid concept.

¹⁷⁸ Cossentino (2006) offered a description of how Montessori students might call for assistance from their teachers via a speechless and meaning laden ritual of touching and waiting their turn. Within the context of the Jewish day school, my own favorite ritual was the practice of standing to honor teachers. I once visited the first grade classroom of an ideologically “right wing” Jewish day school (where this ritual is more prevalent) in order to observe the classroom. As I entered the room, the children spontaneously rose to their feet to welcome and honor an adult visitor. This practice, alone, merits thoughtful ethnographic study about the role of ritual in defining notions of the child in relation to adults.

A number of examples illustrated this point. During the first day of faculty in-service sessions at the end of summer, I walked into a meeting carrying a fruit bar made of nuts and crushed dates. In accordance with Jewish tradition, I said a blessing before eating the snack, but soon found myself wrapped in a detailed discussion with one of the Jewish studies faculty members who had tapped me on the shoulder to ask “why I said that particular blessing? After all, the legal codes disagreed with one another but most used a different blessing...” This kind of experience repeated itself many times. After one end of year meeting, a faculty member led prayers for the conclusion of a meal, but said a portion silently that was otherwise usually recited aloud. After the meeting, a troubled colleague turned to me for advice about how to handle this delicate situation. “We have to work together every day,” the staff member shared, “I don’t want to offend him.” At the same time, neither did my colleague want to compromise his own observance of some of the very detailed ritual practices surrounding eating. It was one more reminder of the central role that ritual culture played in among CDS’ faculty.

Eating was not the only moment that was ritualized. On Fridays, school ended early so that the community could prepare to celebrate Shabbat. While I will address how Shabbat observance impacted life at CDS further below, for immediate purposes it will suffice to note that whether individuals were observant of the rituals of Shabbat or not, that day was nonetheless a central reference point for all members of the school. This was reinforced by the fact that, as a part of regular Friday assemblies, student council members announced the time of candle lighting rituals that would usher in Shabbat. According to traditional Jewish practice, candles had to be lighted eighteen minutes prior to sunset on Friday evening in order to avoid desecrating the Sabbath by

performing work. Since two distinct communities sent their children to CDS, candle lighting times were announced for Woodville as well as the distant suburb of Airedale. Some forty minutes northwest, the time of sunset was actually two minutes later than Woodville, a distinction that was dutifully announced by students and noted on a hallway poster announcing the start of the Jewish Sabbath each week. The dual listings succeeded in making Airedale residents feel more fully included in the CDS community. It also drove home the school's concern for getting the rituals right...down to the minute.¹⁷⁹

Students could be just as engaged by ritual as the faculty appeared to be. During one of Rabbi Sanders' class sessions, a student interrupted the group's Talmud class to ask about a ceremony that was held annually to commemorate the loss of Israeli soldiers who fell in battle. While the music it featured was somber, some Jews refrain from listening to music entirely during a period that extends thirty three days past the first day of Passover celebrations. "Was I allowed to listen to the memorial ceremony today, since they were playing music?" was her question. Rabbi Sanders ignored her question, which she took for an answer of "no." Another student pressed him further, but Sanders just grinned and returned to their scheduled topic. It was not the first time that students and faculty debated the ritual propriety of school policy...and found it not observant enough. Students invested in the rituals of Jewish life in other ways, as well. During the same period of the year when music was shunned by the majority of the Black Hat community, there was also a widespread practice not to shave or cut hair. A small number of students

¹⁷⁹ In the same way that Shabbat observances made students conscious of time, other practices ritualized the very space of the school itself. Doorways were marked with *mezuzot* (a small, handwritten Hebrew scroll containing verses of the book of Deuteronomy). Several rooms in the school which served as both classrooms and prayer spaces had a *mehitzah* (a physical partition) dividing the room, so that male and female students would not occupy common space during prayer services.

responded by hosting two events that year. One was a “no-shave-a-thon,” sponsored by a group who announced a meeting in the cafeteria one Friday to judge the most interesting beard. Another student made a commitment to Locks of Love, a group that donates hair to make wigs for children undergoing chemotherapy. This student had not cut hair since the beginning of school, and chose *Lag baOmer*, a celebratory day on which the spring period of mourning officially ended in the Black Hat community, to cut and donate his impressive shock of hair. Not only did the school administration support his decision, they convened a school-wide assembly in which hundreds of students gathered to cheer as Aaron received his first haircut of the year. Whether the happening of the day was preparation for Shabbat, celebration of a Jewish holiday, commemoration of one of the many days of memorial or even just a regular meal, there was the unmistakable feel of Jewish ritual that permeated the air of CDS. Some of these rituals gave tremendous coherence to the CDS community, and often made the school feel united in purpose and deed. But the power of ritual could be a double edged sword, and that which united the community of CDS could just as easily divide it.

Kashrut

Daniel Pearson, CDS’s High School Principal, was always the epitome of good manners, elegance and propriety. Clean shaven and always well dressed, he was legendary at CDS for sporting a rotating variety of elegant neckties in preppy colors. He made references in correct Latin usage during his remarks at school assemblies, was widely regarded as wholly unflappable and in general imbued CDS with the feel of an exclusive Woodville private school. The latter effect was quite deliberate on the part of CDS. On the warm May afternoon that I sat down to lunch with Mr. Pearson, he was

dressed in surprisingly casual attire. After all, the day was *Yom haAtzma'ut*, the celebration of Israel's Independence Day. In honor of the day, CDS sponsored activities in place of classes, leading up to a school-wide barbeque. I joined Mr. Pearson and Rabbi Oren at an outdoor table packed with other faculty who were enjoying the breeze, the sunshine and the food. Suddenly, Pearson turned to Oren with a puzzled look on his face and asked, "What's going on? You're eating the food! Aren't there some supervision issues?" Oren replied that he and Rabbi Fine had just brought a full-time Rabbi into the kitchen. "As long as Rabbi Herman is there, then I'm fine..." Pearson smiled, and all returned to eating, comforted by the knowledge that there was now an additional rabbi on staff at CDS whose sole duty was keeping watch on the food. Assuredly, everything served by CDS was now guaranteed to be Kosher.

The system of Jewish dietary observance is known as "*kashrut*." Specific foods are either denoted as "*kosher*" (meaning ritually fit for consumption) or "*treif*" (literally "torn" but colloquially understood to be anything un-*kosher*). Procedurally, the laws of *kashrut* are rather detailed, but ultimately break down into a simple set of rules. Certain animals, recorded in Chapter 11 of the Book of Leviticus, are not to be eaten by the Children of Israel. Meat must be slaughtered in accordance with a strict ritual, and all blood removed. Milk and meat are kept separate, a restriction that is only vaguely worded in the Bible, but refined and expanded considerably by the Rabbis of the Talmudic era leading up to 450 C.E. Sociologically, the system is even more complex. While many Jews view food as an important part of their ethnic identity, there is a wide range of practice regarding the Talmudic requirements and culinary restrictions involved. For some, it is enough to avoid pork or shellfish, while more religiously exacting Jews

seek out meat butchered under strict rabbinic supervision and are scrupulous to check vegetables for the tiniest aphid. There is even a level of “super-kosher” food, such as *holov yisrael* (dairy products that have been under rabbinic scrutiny from the moment a cow was milked) or *pat yisrael* (the prohibition of eating bread baked by non-Jews)¹⁸⁰. Like many practices, kashrut has been transformed into a powerful cultural signifier denoting a range of affiliations, beliefs and even communal memberships (Douglas, 1971; Joselit, 1995; Kraemer, 2007).

It is clear from my research that individuals connected to CDS fully appreciated the ability of *kashrut* to set boundaries for their community. During field interviews, almost half of the parents who spoke with me volunteered unsolicited information about their observance of *kashrut* as a way of defining their religious or ethnic identities. Some grew up keeping Kosher or had taken on this practice in adulthood. Others knew about *kashrut* but did not observe its strictures. A few parents observed particular aspects of the Jewish dietary laws selectively, as in one household which proudly abstained from eating pork or shellfish but served chicken cooked with feta cheese on the evening of their interview with me.¹⁸¹ It was also clear that families expected their religious choices around food to be respected, no matter what those choices were.¹⁸² The range of religious practice among CDS households was impressive for its breadth, and made it

¹⁸⁰ Rabbi Oren, one of the most ritually conservative members of the staff, described the impact that his own observance patterns made upon CDS students. As a leader of CDS’ month long Israel trip for graduating seniors, Oren refused to eat food supervised by “the Jerusalem Rabbinate” because “I don’t trust them.” Instead, he had special food brought in, prompting questions and a “a ton of conversation” among his students. Oren felt that his own strictures sent a positive message to his students. “Every one of them said, ‘look, he’s for real,’ or ‘wow, he’ll go a couple of extra hours without food.’ ...It clicked to many of them that I wasn’t eating, and they said, ‘oh, this is authentic Judaism.’”

¹⁸¹ The parents made jokes about the irony of their dinner selection, which was a departure from the traditional observance of *kashrut*, during their interview. See Family #3 interview, lines 310-315, 834-835.

¹⁸² One parent praised the headmaster for not being judgmental about her choices. “If I said I’m going to lunch at McDonalds, she’ll say ‘have a good lunch,’ (even though wouldn’t go) anywhere near it!” Family #3 interview, line 684.

clear that the school truly did cater to a religiously diverse student body. But given that diversity, just what kind of communal dynamics arise when households who might not keep kosher send their children to be educated by teachers who won't eat their own school's food unless it is supervised by an Orthodox rabbi? Three dynamics emerged out of my field work: Frequent accommodation, occasional dislocation and a judicious resort to a strategy that I will describe as the deferral of value conflicts.

Patterns of accommodation were most evident as parents and administrators described the interactions of peer students, some of whom kept kosher while others did not. In order to make plans that would be fully inclusive of all members of the group, multiple informants described the clear but unwritten rule that the students uniformly deferred to the strictest dietary needs present when making plans for a meal. During the year of my field work, the star of the CDS varsity basketball team came from a ritually observant family. "If Phillip was coming along and the team is going to get something to eat, they pick Fairview Pizza instead of...you know, (something not kosher.) ... I don't think (my son) Aaron rolls his eyes and says 'what a hassle.' I don't think he does." Another parent described similar scenarios, such as a party or a study group, and emphasized her daughter's commitment to CDS' unwritten rules regarding food. "They have to honor each others values. I'm really careful if her friends come to make sure that we have paper plates,¹⁸³ that the food is appropriate, so there's nothing in the house that's offered to children that one person feels they can have and somebody else can't."

The striking aspect of students' attempts to accommodate other peers' needs was the implicit flexibility in the way that students made choices. The presence of a single

¹⁸³ Even clean plates previously used for non-kosher food would not be acceptable to the most observant students.

religiously observant peer might swing the decision of an entire group ...a group which on some other occasion would certainly pick non-kosher food. While this pragmatic and flexible stance towards group decision making was a point of pride to some, it sometimes did not go far enough in making each student or adult feel included in the community of CDS. The parent of one observant student complained bitterly that her daughter stayed after school for drama rehearsals, only to sit down with fellow cast members who were dining on *treif* pizza. Another faculty member confessed to his sense of disconnection from students, as well as his feeling of shock at seeing students bring non-kosher food into the building.¹⁸⁴ Clearly, CDS did not expect all of its students and faculty to maintain the same standards of ritual observance, but even so, finding practical ways to bridge this gap often took greater energy than one might have imagined.

When patterns of accommodation lapsed, a sense of dislocation or alienation was palpable, largely on the part of faculty members. In the case of *kashrut*, an important issue regarding non-kosher food entering the CDS building surfaced during my year of field work. The response of faculty and administrators alike offered a very clear view of the challenges that were inherent in maintaining harmonious relationships among so many individuals who held profoundly different values...and acted accordingly. Instead of addressing religious and cultural differences between students and faculty in this situation, CDS elected to strategically defer engagement of contested values.

The conflict began with a sandwich wrapper. Two of the privileges that senior students at CDS had were the opportunity to drive to school, as well as the freedom to go off campus during lunch break. On the days that students went out to lunch, a lot of food

¹⁸⁴ Oren interview, lines 42-44. Similar frustration was reported by other faculty members, as well. Note Adler interview, lines 385-404.

came back to school. Bags started turning up in the garbage from McDonalds, Subway and other places that were obviously not kosher. Privately, staff members like Rabbi Oren felt angered. But publicly, the school administration had to address a very sensitive issue that cut to the heart of CDS' mission. Was it the school's policy to insist that all students observed the same religious rules in their private lives, or simply that students abide by some shared etiquette in public spaces? The way in which lines were drawn spoke much about CDS as an institution.

Since the issue involved senior class members, Rabbi Fine was elected to speak with students, along with Hannah Silverman, CDS' Director of Student Life. The choice was itself striking. Silverman served as the first line of engagement on all issues of student conduct and discipline. She was a veteran CDS staff member and a strict enforcer of school policy. While Silverman was Jewish, she was also clearly identified as not religiously observant in her private life. By contrast, Rabbi Fine brought the signature costume of a Black Hat rabbi to his role as faculty advisor to the Senior Class. They called students together for a meeting one Friday afternoon, and laid down the law. Silverman began by expressing concern that many students were bringing non-kosher food back to campus during their lunch breaks, clearly in violation of school policy. Rabbi Fine joined in, noting, "It's not a religious issue, a kosher issue. It's a school rule, of respect for the building, and respect for other people. Some people have said 'It's OK, it's soda, it's tuna...' So, a new rule. Anything you eat off campus must be consumed off campus. It's like 'what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.'" At this, a lone student raised her hand and asked, "Rabbi Fine, what about Starbucks?" a shop that mostly did serve Kosher food. Fine looked up with a sigh that clearly betrayed his exasperation and

replied, “Look, try to feel some sort of sensitivity towards CDS and towards other students.” In the end, Silverman and Fine made the policy as clear as could be: Students could eat whatever they wanted, kosher or not, off campus, but no food of any kind could return to CDS. If students continued to abuse this privilege, then the entire senior class would lose their off-campus privileges. With that, the meeting ended and students were sent back to class.

I later asked Hannah Silverman just what she felt the entire issue had been about. Again and again, Silverman returned to the question of respect. “If we’re going to allow them to go off campus for lunch...to give them that respect as young adults...then (they) can’t disrespect the institution by bringing things back ... that (they) know are not allowed be in the building.” As my discussion with Silverman continued, I probed deeper, asking whether some emotional baggage was potentially involved in issues that touch upon Jewish practice or the diversity of the school community. Her answer was clear. “For me it’s a discipline issue...These are the rules, and when you disobey the rules you’re being disrespectful to CDS as an institution.”

In spite of Mrs. Silverman and Rabbi Fine’s public comments, remarks by Oren and Adler from private interviews made it clear that something essential to the religious landscape of CDS was in play. During the later portion of my interview with her, Silverman admitted her concern that the presence of non-Kosher food in the building was angering rabbis on staff. The issue was not just about food...it threatened to escalate to the point that the whole notion of community had come into question. Still, as a community day school which went out of its way to welcome a diverse group of students, it seemed untenable to enforce rules of *kashrut* upon the entire student body. This

moment was one of several that underscored the fundamental challenge inherent in CDS' entire *raison d'être*. Just how should a pluralistic school with Black Hat, Orthodox faculty respond when their students come back from lunch with the food they are used to eating on a daily basis?

Over the course of my work at CDS, I began to note several issues of similar character. Across the board, the response was one that I label "deferral."¹⁸⁵ Rabbi Fine's comments expressed the tension inherent in this moment perfectly: A black suited rabbi with a long white beard was asking students to eat non-kosher food off-campus under the guise of school policy, not religion. But Fine was, if nothing else, certainly true to his word. He deliberately did not focus on religious differences, nor did he question his students' right to eat whatever food they chose. For a rabbi who was well versed with the religious reasons for not eating at McDonalds, the appeal to school policy represented a shift of focus, one which deferred potential conflict over religious values and brought administrative or procedural trappings of life in school to the forefront. It was a wise strategy; one which reaffirmed that school policy was non-negotiable but respected the religious autonomy of each individual student to do as he or she wished. As I learned during the course of my field work, such strategic deferral of value conflicts was essential to maintaining a hard won equilibrium in the life of CDS. After the Friday assembly, seniors suddenly began taking their full lunch break off campus, and the bags of McDonalds hamburgers were not seen again.

¹⁸⁵ Other faculty members expressed a similar awareness that "when push comes to shove, there is a great deal *vis a vis halachah* (Jewish law and practice) that is not enforced and that people look the other way..." Significantly, this observation was an important basis for Friedman's claim that CDS was, indeed, a "community day school" as opposed to an Orthodox one.

Shabbat

The most essential feature of Shabbat in Jewish practice is the act of consecrating the seventh day of the week, Biblically regarded as the day on which God ceased the work of creating the universe. Traditionally, the Jewish Sabbath begins on Friday at sundown and lasts until Saturday evening, after the stars come out. It is a time of celebration, with festive meals, gatherings for prayer and elegant standards of dress that set it apart from the working week. Another traditional component of Shabbat observance is the mandate to abstain from work, loosely understood as any skilled craft or physical endeavor such as building. There are a great deal of activities that Rabbinic Judaism includes in the idea of work, including writing, making fires or even carrying objects through a public space. Among the most prominent restrictions that distinguish observant Jews in the modern era is a refusal to ride in a car or use electricity on Shabbat. These restrictions along with other ritual practices involved in Shabbat observance create a separate social and cultural space which the ritually observant inhabit. In ways that go far beyond *kashrut*, individuals who are traditionally observant define a critical part of their identity by virtue of their commitment to “keeping Shabbat” in this distinctive fashion. At a school like CDS, where students and faculty embraced very different approaches to Shabbat, the way in which participants in the life of the school negotiated the reality of these differences revealed much about the character of CDS as a community.

Initially, it appeared that many of the same dynamics surrounding the observance of *kashrut* had their own corollary in relationship to Shabbat. The Jewish studies faculty was uniformly strict in ritual practice. At the same time, parents reported a range of

choices in their individual observance, from those who would not ride in a car on Shabbat under any circumstance to those who drove but only to synagogue and finally those who did not elect any particular level of Shabbat observance. By comparison, fewer families observed the ritual restrictions of Shabbat than those who reported keeping kosher, and even those families who observed the rituals of *kashrut* at home mostly did not observe the restrictions of Shabbat. In this aspect, the observance of Shabbat among CDS families set them at a greater remove from the religious faculty who taught their children. Several faculty members expressed these sentiments during my year of field work, including one who complained that non-religious Jews were intolerant of others who observed Shabbat.

Perhaps the most powerful anecdotal account of this nature was reported by Rabbi Oren, who described an encounter that he had with one CDS student during a Shabbat program that took place during his first year at CDS. After spending an entire day studying together, Oren and the student stepped out of the building and prepared to head home on Shabbat afternoon. As Oren began walking towards home, his student took out a set of car keys, waved goodbye, and drove off. “I was in absolute shock, that guy would come to learn all (day)... and it didn’t even phase him...of course he was getting in his car and driving away. It phased me. Majorly.” When I asked Rabbi Oren what he had learned from the whole encounter. He replied that “as much as we are so open and we have to love everybody... there have to be boundaries. Some things are acceptable and some things aren’t. I mean, pluralism as a whole is dangerous because (if we are pluralistic, then)...we don’t stand for anything.” I later asked Oren if his reaction to CDS had changed over time, and he admitted that he had grown more comfortable with the

religious diversity of his students...perhaps as comfortable as he was going to get.

Shabbat observance remained a dividing line for him...a line that he did not want to see blurred at any cost.

Fortunately, the question of Shabbat observance did not always evoke such strong reactions on the part of faculty or students. Over time, the faculty of CDS had developed an approach to negotiating the question of Shabbat that bore some relationship to the “deferral” strategy that came into play regarding *kashrut*. In the case of Shabbat it soon became clear that an appeal to legal fiction could offer the CDS faculty a means of coexistence in close quarters with their students. This became particularly clear when CDS faculty, who were legendary for their hospitality, described the lengths to which they went in order to invite students over to their homes for a Shabbat meal. The question, of course, was “where do they park?”

It was a spring afternoon as I sat in on Leah Feldman’s Bible class. After a year of study together, Feldman and her 11th grade students had developed a well honed rapport. Sometimes earnest, sometimes frivolous but always willing to engage her students in a good discussion. On that day, Feldman reminded the class that they were all invited over for Shabbat lunch next weekend. Inevitably, the conversation turned to logistics—when to arrive, what address, and finally, whether anyone needs to sleep over.

I know a lot of you go to Sha’arey (for Shabbat morning services). Our house is in walking distance. If you have to drive, my response is that you are invited to spend (all of Shabbat) with us. We have a lovely guest room. You may stay with other friends (who live nearby). But I’m not going to ask you how you got there.

Later, in one of my interviews with her, Feldman confessed that the invitation to sleep over was a kind of window dressing. After all, she couldn’t ask her students to

drive on Shabbat. At the same time, Feldman appreciated the importance of inviting them over as a way of building connections. “So, what I told them was, they are all invited to stay, and other than that, I’m not looking to see how they got to my house. If they drive, they drive. If they walk, they walk. I’m not searching out to know how they got to me.”

Feldman’s invitation was genuine. There was, indeed, a guest room as well as a large basement where many teens had stayed overnight. More importantly, there was Feldman’s *p’sak din* from Rabbi Weiss. Rabbi Avi Weiss is one of the better known Orthodox rabbis in America. A progressive Orthodox thinker, he is often approached by individuals seeking his *p’sak din*, literally, his ruling in a matter of Jewish law. For observant Jews, the *p’sak din* of a religious authority is a very significant matter, as this ruling will make a determinative pronouncement regarding the ritual permissibility or impropriety of an unclear issue. In this case, Rabbi Weiss’ *p’sak din* stood as the ruling that Feldman relied upon when inviting guests who might wind up violating the prohibition against driving in order to reach her house on Shabbat day. He ruled that the invitation was acceptable as long as the guest had an opportunity to stay through the end of Shabbat as a guest in Feldman’s home. In the most general terms, Weiss’ ruling absolved Feldman of any responsibility for the desecration of Shabbat that her guests might incur. In a more practical sense, this ruling offered an important legal fiction that stood as the basis for most of the hospitality extended by CDS faculty towards students: As long as you have the option to sleep over my house, you are free to drive there if you choose.

Feldman was not alone in making use of this legal fiction. Rabbi Warren, the religious leader and ultimate religious authority at both Sha'arey and CDS, spoke very forthrightly about the number of his congregants who drove to his synagogue for services on Shabbat day. He, too, relied upon the *p'sak din* of a famous religious leader, Rabbi Zalman Auerbach, in allowing people to drive on Shabbat. Warren was squarely pragmatic about this issue: The invitation to stay over was “a stretch...a way around (the issue)” but in the end he noted that “everybody walks here (on Shabbat day). Some from their car, some from their house. Everybody walks here.”

I interviewed Leah Feldman a week following her luncheon and asked explicitly where the kids parked. Her reply was as clear as one could be in this situation.

I don't know. I didn't ask. I can imagine that they probably parked around the corner, a block away, um, probably a lot of them did walk, because most of them are local kids. Maybe they even parked on my street. I don't know. I didn't look. And I specifically didn't look because I didn't want...them to feel embarrassed if they did drive.

The reply clearly illustrated one of the essential challenges that CDS had to contend with on a regular basis: How to preserve respect for traditional ritual without embarrassing students or allowing faculty to feel that they had compromised important religious convictions. While the resort to legal fiction was understood by all to be a kind of ruse, it nonetheless allowed students and teachers to interact in a way that might otherwise have been off limits. At least one of Feldman's students was kind enough to razz his teacher ever so indelicately on the spring afternoon that Feldman sat planning with her class. Informed that a “don't ask don't tell” policy regarding driving was in effect; one teenage boy looked up and proposed, “Can I park on your lawn?” The request was met with a smile, but no more.

In the majority of circumstances, the legal fiction of “room at the inn” seemed to cover most cases where events were planned on Shabbat. There was one notable exception during my year of field work, an incident that created an extraordinary degree of strife and laid bare some of the deepest internal conflicts which could beset CDS.¹⁸⁶ For many years, CDS had hosted a weekend-long basketball tournament that drew students from Jewish day schools across North America. This year, there was even a team of Israeli students that Rabbi Oren had managed to invite for the weekend. The usual program was a round of social activities on Thursday, followed by elimination games on Friday day. The tournament paused in the afternoon, allowing students to prepare for Shabbat services on Friday evening, followed by morning prayers and social events on Shabbat day. Following sundown, another round of elimination games led up to playoffs and finals on Sunday.

Planning seemed to be moving ahead in an orderly fashion during the weeks leading up to the tournament. As the event drew nearer, sleeping quarters for the visiting teams were suddenly in short supply, so a number of guests were offered accommodations with CDS families who lived in the neighboring suburb of Rosewood. This represented a change from the previous year, when visiting teams were housed within walking distance of Sha’arey. This year, a large number of hosts were five to ten miles away from the school, and it became apparent that visiting students would be expected to ride to services on Shabbat morning along with their CDS host families. Suddenly the legal fiction that had given plausibility to other Shabbat invitations seemed dubious. There was no real option for out of town visitors—if they all requested

¹⁸⁶ While specific quotes within the next several paragraphs are attributed as noted, below, the larger narrative description of this incident emerged from four separate faculty interviews with Rabbi Fine, Rabbi Oren, Sharon Berman and Rabbi Warren. Their descriptions merge into the single narrative which follows.

accommodations within walking distance, then the entire program would fall apart.

Faculty who originally understood the policy of Shabbat invitations as a loophole within their own religious observance increasingly felt that CDS had offered blanket permission for the desecration of Shabbat. Rabbi Sanders was shocked. “To have a school that would...encourage...kids to be *mehallel shabbos* (to violate the laws of Shabbat) blows my mind...It’s the exact opposite of what I understood the school stood for.” That’s when the phone calls started.

Troubled by what he saw, Rabbi Fine went to the head of his yeshiva to ask for guidance. At the same time, other faculty members began consulting their Rabbis and teachers for a *p’sak din*. Were they allowed to participate in this program? According to Rabbi Oren, individual members contacted their religious guides as far away as New York and even Jerusalem, all asking the same question. Buoyed by the *p’sak din* that they received, the religious studies faculty approached the point of open revolt against the school’s administration. To make matters worse, Rabbi Warren was incensed that his authority was being undermined by Black Hat religious figures that represented a very different approach to Jewish law than the modern, progressive path he espoused. The rift became clear to all when even Rabbi Newman, the most religiously liberal member of the entire faculty, sent out an email apologizing that he “would not...be able to make it” that weekend. This last defection apparently hit the hardest since Newman had been trained in one of the most left-leaning Orthodox institutions in the United States. By all accounts, Newman’s decision to join ranks with his Black Hat colleagues set him in direct conflict with Rabbi Warren, who lambasted Newman, saying “I didn’t know that you were one of them (the ultra-Orthodox).” Eventually, Rabbi Fine called a meeting

with Rabbi Warren, and the two of them hashed out details that included practical options for making the program successful. They openly discussed the very painful issues that had surfaced, including Warren's indignation that the Black Hat community would attack the credibility of his leadership and the potential disconnect between the faculty's values and CDS' mission. Ultimately, visiting terms were assured that they could have hospitality within walking distance if they required it. Some students were assigned to different hosts within walking distance to Sha'arey while others did, indeed, spend the weekend in Rosewood and drove to synagogue on Shabbat day with their host families. Despite the attempt to handle things quietly, a few families who had waited for years to host students were now miffed because students assigned to them were sent elsewhere. According to Oren, they felt that the school had judged them as "not the right kind of family" since they did not observe Shabbat. The tournament weekend came and went. CDS' teams took two major trophies. While there was much to celebrate among students, faculty members to this day recall the 2006 tournament as one of the most conflicted and painful moments that they had negotiated in recent years. As Oren noted, "that's what happens when you mess with Shabbat."

Modeling Patterns of Culture: A First Read

By definition this study is an act of hermeneutics, an attempt to "read" the "text" of one community and make meaning out of field observations about the lives of its members. The anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown (1952) described this process as a move from ideographic knowledge of the "concrete, observable, phenomenal reality" (p. 3) towards nomothetic understanding as the researcher delved into increasingly more coherent but abstracted theorization about what his or her observations meant. One of the

challenges in this process is that the nomothetic propositions do not come into view all at once but, rather, emerge into focus gradually as the details of field work and first person observation aggregate into a coherent set of experiences (Mehan & Wood, 1975). The researcher is placed in a classic Catch-22, unwilling to defer the act of theorizing until the end of this chapter, once “tales of the field” have been fully told, but similarly unable to offer sweeping conclusions *in media res*. Instead, this study seeks a middle ground, and will develop theoretical conclusions incrementally, in an emergent fashion. Based upon initial observations about the CDS community and its relationship to the rituals that accompany the Sabbath day as well as restrictions on food consumption, I propose two important initial conclusions.

First, it is evident that fully shared patterns of ritual practice were not likely to serve as the basis for a coherent communal identity at CDS. Earlier in this work, I invoked Etienne Wenger’s (1999) notion of a community of practice as a valuable set of lenses for examining the dynamics of participation in community. Wenger identified the process of negotiating the meaning of a shared repertoire of common practices as a critical component of the glue that bound otherwise disparate individuals together into organized communities. As part of this process, members of a community praise or otherwise invest value in specific practices which then become reified as exemplars of legitimate action. At the same time, the community criticizes or restricts practices they deem inappropriate or illegitimate. This dynamic of participation and reification generates the broader notion of a repertoire, a shared set of legitimate practices whose conduct affords insider status to faithful practitioners while relegating non-performers to the role of outsiders. In Wenger’s terms, the notion of ritual performance at CDS was

fraught with the potential to include or exclude a given individual from the community of ritual practitioners.

What I observed at CDS was a thoughtful give and take among students that enabled individuals with different practices to share common space. Still, this etiquette of inclusion merely heightened the underlying fact that ritual differences were a potential threat to community, not a source of shared identity. The faculty's resort to strategies of deferral or legal fiction also made it evident that ritual behavior separated them from their students. The most dramatic events surrounding disagreements with CDS' Shabbat policies showed a lack of consensus between teaching staff and the very administration for which they worked. Simply stated, ritual practices appeared to divide CDS far more than they united it. At least on first face, CDS could simply not claim to be a community in the sense that Wenger intended.

This reality suggests a second, equally important proposition. The tendency of ritual to create divisions between cultural insiders and outsiders suggests the necessity for some other point of reference to exercise a compelling and unifying claim upon members of the institution. At the introduction to this section, I referenced the writing of several important theorists of the nature of ritual behavior, including Douglas, Driver and Turner. Driver and Turner's work is notable in this context inasmuch as they suggest that the purpose of ritual is to help negotiate liminality, to enforce boundaries of group membership and otherwise normalize the status of individuals within a larger collective (Driver, 1991; Turner, 1969). By contrast, and in spite of their own commitment to ritual observance, the faculty and administration of CDS worked to minimize the profile of ritual within the school. By treating *kashrut* as an administrative or procedural matter,

the school deferred engagement on essential questions regarding why, or even whether, a student ought to keep kosher in the first place. By resorting to legal fictions around hospitality, the faculty similarly legitimated the choice to drive on Shabbat, a choice that they fundamentally opposed. The big question, from an anthropological perspective, is why the faculty resorted to the strategies of deferral or legal fiction at all.

Mary Douglas (1970) suggested that every society somehow attends to the demands of “group” and “grid,” where group represents the authority imposed by the bounded social unit and grid represents the rules or codes which relate one individual to another. While Douglas argued for the existence of four societal typologies along an overlapping axis of grid/group norms, at this stage of analysis it will be adequate to compare the essential dynamics of grid and group in the life of CDS. The category of grid was effectively represented by the range of behaviors derived from ritual practice. These encoded and publicly shared practices regulated the behavior of individuals in both their private conduct as well as their individual interactions by determining when work would be performed, what foods might be eaten, how to worship and even by setting boundaries around intimate personal relationships.¹⁸⁷ The category of group was manifest by way of institutional procedures and collective expectations, such as attendance rules, school dress codes and even the norm that students eating meals together defer to the dietary needs of the most ritually observant peer.

While the faculty’s decision to defer ritual expectations surrounding *kashrut* or to rely upon a legal fiction in the case of Shabbat hospitality might initially appear antithetical to the objectives of Orthodox Jewish educators, Douglas’ framework helps to

¹⁸⁷ This last point, regarding boundaries of intimacy, was a “grid” issue that multiple faculty members referenced repeatedly during the course of my field work.

restore a measure of rationality to these choices. In both cases, the staff of CDS sacrificed an opportunity to defend norms of the ritual grid. In its place, they further empowered the claim of the group and the value of belonging. In the case of non-kosher food, faculty affirmed the autonomy of students but insisted that they “respect the building” or face censure. In the case of Shabbat hospitality, long after the fracas over CDS’ basketball tournament had quieted down, students were still parking around the block from their teachers homes...and walking the last few steps to lunch. In both cases, faculty essentially secularized the cultural field of CDS by dropping or circumventing claims to a religious grid that might undermine the coherence of the institutional group.

Given the importance of understanding the dynamics of the group (as opposed to grid), the next two sections of this chapter explore issues that are fundamental to the nature of group identity as they play out in relationships between religious studies faculty and students. The first of these two dynamics relates to an essential feature of the group, namely, the perception of inclusion or exclusion on the part of faculty and students at CDS.

Inclusion and Exclusion

View from the top...and beyond

As I sat down to my first interview with Linda Klein, CDS’ Director of Admissions, I paused to take in the sight of her office. Modern furniture and an elegant coffee table gave the feel of a VIP reception area. Looking across the walls, there were photos of students, samples of past advertising campaigns...and then there were the quotes. “Our house is open to all.” “Our students are as diverse as our community.”

These words served as the headlines for beautifully laid out promotional materials, well crafted and purposefully placed. The message seemed clear, yet I was cautious about reading too much into the school's advertising slogans. Did the reality of life at CDS match its marketing?

Among the schools leadership, there appeared to be tremendous clarity and unity of purpose regarding the character of CDS. My first indication came during Mrs. Stein's opening remarks to the faculty during the fall staff orientation. After welcoming her community of teachers back to work, Stein reminded them that CDS was created to welcome many different students from different backgrounds. She dwelled on the idea that "there is more than one way to be a good Jew" and that "there is more than one access road" to Jewish life. Rabbi Warren was equally vocal about the inclusive character of CDS, describing it as a place that was "open to the broadest spectrum of religious observance, religious knowledge and religious commitment." While I expected to hear Warren make this kind of comment, I was surprised to hear him take one step further as he mused about "the mix" of different religious backgrounds that students brought to CDS. In his words, that mix was not just "welcome" but truly important for the success of CDS' high school as a whole. As field research progressed, I continued to compare this "view from the top," with other impressions.

At the start of my field research, a local publication ran a long article on CDS, profiling the school's achievements and highlighting some of the same issues relating to diversity and community that this study was intended to explore. The school arranged interviews with some of their alumni who seemed like "poster children" for the notion of inclusiveness that CDS' leadership touted. One was a young woman who had studied at

CDS and later went on to become a Rabbi in the Reform movement. She noted that CDS was the place where she learned “how to live a Jewish life,” and credited her high school education as the experience which persuaded her that “there are many ways to be Jewish and they are all valid.”

During public moments of commemoration and celebration, the administration of CDS clearly went out of its way to drive home this message. Each spring, the school held a well attended ceremony to honor members of the graduating Senior class just a few days before they left to study for six weeks in Israel. Nearly one thousand people attended the ceremony, including students as young as Kindergarten as well as the parents, relatives and friends of CDS graduates. The ceremony began with the American and Israeli national anthems, followed by CDS’ school song, a composition which celebrated “gathering together under one roof.” As the ceremony unfolded, younger students came forward to sing another song in Hebrew:¹⁸⁸

| | |
|---|--|
| They ask who am I? | שואלים מי אני |
| Not European of Spanish ¹⁸⁹ | אני לא אשכנזי, לא ספרדי |
| Yemenite of French | לא תימני, לא צרפתי |
| I am simply a Jew | אני יהודי |
| All of Israel is bound together, one to another. All of Israel are brothers. We are all Jews. | כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה כל ישראל אחים אנחנו יהודים |
| All of Israel is bound together, one to another. | כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה |

¹⁸⁸ English translation by author.

¹⁸⁹ These designations correspond to an historically important division within the Jewish world. While maintaining basic parity in religious practice, the European or Ashkenazi Jewish community developed a completely different aesthetic sense, different spiritual practices and widely divergent modes cultural experience from their brothers and sisters in the Sephardic or Spanish sphere of influence which extended from Portugal to Spain and Morocco. These cultural influences remain important boundary lines even today for the descendants of these communities who mostly reside in Israel (Zohar, 2005).

Even more striking than the words of this song in Hebrew was the rendition which followed. Rather than a literal translation of the Hebrew (as provided above) the students continued by singing a very loose interpretation. “We still believe in what can be / All Jewish souls from sea to sea / It matters not our geography / If we disagree, we still can live in unity.” The song was significant in many ways. Was it representative of the true state of affairs at CDS, or merely aspirational? As a fluent Hebrew speaker, I felt the variance in translation of the original lyrics quite powerfully. This image of acceptance and unity was deeply inspiring, but ultimately led me to question just how much of CDS’ core vision was real, how much aspiration; how much was spoken honestly and how much might have been deftly mistranslated? For a more complete view of community at CDS, I turned towards the views and experiences of the individuals who ultimately made up the largest component of the CDS community, parents and students.

Several years before my interview, Mrs. Stein suffered the loss of a parent who lived in Israel. As her family gathered in Jerusalem in order to observe *shivah*, a seven day period of mourning, scores of Stein’s students descended upon their home to visit her. Some had gone on from CDS to work in secular *kibbutzim* (collective communities governed by socialist economic principles), while others were studying in Orthodox *yeshivot*. Some dressed in secular costumes...others wore the ritual fringes of the Black Hat community. One even wore olive; he was volunteering in a unit of the Israeli army and requested leave to console his teacher. According to Stein, her family was impressed by the very breadth of her students and by the idea that so many individuals who had such different beliefs would find common bonds. The experience was repeated when another one of Stein’s graduates went to Israel to study in a post-high school program

that catered to more liberal Jewish students. As friends from CDS arrived to visit, some came dressed in the uniform of the Yeshivah world, while others wore tank tops. One young woman sported a modest, long skirt while another dressed in a miniskirt and “earrings in various body parts.” Her friends, who had never seen such a gathering, questioned “just how do you know all these kids?” Whether it was a willingness to accommodate different levels of Shabbat observance or the understanding that a CDS student who practiced Wicca would be afforded respect for her beliefs, CDS seemed to inspire in its students a penchant for stretching beyond narrow conceptions of what was acceptable. At CDS’ graduation, the school’s commencement speaker delivered remarks in Hebrew in which she pointedly declared “Hashuv latzet mihutz laMisgeret.” (It’s important to go beyond boundaries.) She concluded by remarking that “CDS gave me a chance to be together with students from other religious backgrounds...in a way that makes it different from any other Jewish day school.”

Roughly half of the CDS parents who granted interviews articulated this idea of inclusiveness with just as much fervor as CDS leaders. While Lia Roberts did not have a commitment to Jewish ritual or observance, she described the “positive and wholesome” values of CDS as the principal reason that drew her to send children to the school. For her, inclusiveness was reflected in the way that students connected socially without pressure to conform to a set model of behavior. For Roberts, “It feels like family to me when I walk in to the school.” Another CDS parent, Rabbi Robert Lerner, echoed the sense that divisive labels did not apply to CDS students. While his daughter’s adherence to the family’s Orthodox and observant lifestyle made her an exception to the religious and social norms of the CDS student body, he insisted that “there are no names, there are

no (labels)” at school. Lerner specifically sought out CDS because he wanted his child to realize that “your world includes all of these different people.”

Throughout multiple parent interviews, respondents indicated that CDS was a place where students and faculty negotiated...and crossed...religious boundaries by making accommodations for one another. When Rachel Greenfield described her daughter’s social world, she stressed the idea that different beliefs and lifestyles became secondary or blended together based upon the respect that students showed for each others’ beliefs or lifestyle. Nina Klein offered the perspective of a non-observant Israeli who found the school “welcoming of people who did not have a kosher home.” She added praise for some of the more observant faculty who bent “over backwards to make it right for the kids” who came from different backgrounds. This kind of respect seemed to flow in both directions for Orthodox parents like the Schick family, who described their son’s classes with the one Reform rabbi on staff as a “challenge” that they were eager for him to experience. Vardit Maimoni, an Israeli parent who had come to America two decades prior to our conversation, described the inclusiveness of CDS in stark contrast to Israel.

There were (religious) people (in Israel) who threw rocks on people who drove on Shabbat, and with that kind of feeling I came here. I told my friends I am teaching in an Orthodox school and they almost fainted..(but) I came here and saw the love, the welcome, the respect that I felt from the principal all the way through the teachers that knew that I don’t go to shul, and I do not necessarily keep a kosher home...They gave me respect and appreciation as a person.

These comments and field observations reinforced the notion that Stein and Warren’s vision of inclusion was broadly shared and genuinely experienced by students and parents throughout the school. Two themes were emergent. First, CDS welcomed a

diversity of student identities and worked seriously to include them in a shared conception of who “belonged” at the school. Second, the school actively constructed an inclusive institutional identity through the use of rituals, ceremonies and other public performances that symbolically legitimated the notion of difference as a cherished value in the culture of CDS.

Those who study the life of schools share the sense that culture is both deep and pervasive (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Lightfoot, 1983). Nonetheless, culture can also be delicate. While actors on the stage of CDS consistently referenced the notion of inclusion, their sense of this value was sometimes surprisingly constrained. An inordinate amount of faculty, parent and student dialogue focused on the experience of negotiating ritual boundaries. Even Warren’s comments about welcoming students with “the broadest spectrum of religious observance” had the effect of elevating a ritual frame of reference over and above a host of other equally important and contested categories of student experience such as intellectual life, politics, culture or gender. The focus on ritual and religious identity remained a gap to be bridged, and the primacy of these reference points could just as easily invite other conflicts that cut very deeply into CDS’ delicate and contradictory sense of its own identity. At multiple points during field work, both parents and faculty shared a sense of how challenging it was to belong to CDS.

The chameleon’s crisis

Shortly after the beginning of field work, I noticed that members of the CDS community invested a prodigious amount of energy in acts of self definition. Among parents, the label most commonly invoked was either “Orthodox” or “non-Orthodox” as they described their children’s teachers, themselves and ultimately the very character of

CDS. Faculty engaged in other debates, often brilliantly detailed, about whether a particular action or positions of belief was or was not “in accordance with *halachah*” (the tradition of Jewish law and practice). The most quizzical discussions revolved around the character of the school which purported to draw all parties together. As a community day school housed in a Modern Orthodox congregation that employed Black Hat teachers to educate mostly Reform and Conservative affiliated children, just what labels made sense? Did any? A view to the school’s origin might help explain.

Linda Klein, the director of admissions, described CDS as originally a Modern Orthodox school which was affiliated with and grew naturally out of the Modern Orthodox Congregation Sha’arey Hesed. Despite this relatively clear and simple set of defining parameters, CDS began promoting itself early on as “a school where every Jewish child will be comfortable and find their place.” Rabbi Warren argued strongly for the inclusive character of the school out of his own belief that American Orthodoxy could be broad enough to encompass many differences. He insisted that CDS “never veered from the principles of Orthodoxy” but was prepared to “stretch (principle) it as far as it can go” for the sake of inclusiveness. He argued that if only one stream or one sub-set of the Woodville Jewish community attended his school, then it would be a failure. Mrs. Stein argued, with equal fervor, that CDS was a community school, and had to be independent enough to serve the whole Jewish community.

The issue of CDS’ tie to Sha’arey was a sticking point, and sometimes a source of tension. As Rabbi Fine, the Senior Class Advisor and “spiritual director” of the school described CDS, he cast a different picture. “Well, we are an Orthodox school. We are aligned with an Orthodox synagogue which is aligned with the Orthodox Union. There is

no way to get around that.” Apparently others had tried. At least one parent described conversations with the admissions department in which she pointedly asked about whether girls participated equally in prayer services along with boys. The director of admissions replied, “Don’t try to change us. Others have tried and failed.”

In reality, the larger community of Woodville along with its Reform and Conservative rabbinic leadership had very few things that they wanted to change about CDS, save one. They argued repeatedly for the creation of an egalitarian *minyan* (prayer service), a space where teenage boys and girls could have equal roles leading parts of the school’s daily prayer service. Sharon Berman, the school’s activity director, stated forthrightly that the tie of CDS to Sha’arey made it impossible for the school to host a fully gender-inclusive *minyan*. Spurred by this refusal, leaders of the Woodville community went so far as to create an entirely new, competing high school which featured gender equality as a defining element of its institutional character. The initiative further intensified the community’s argument that CDS was not nearly as inclusive as it claimed. “CDS is an Orthodox day school,” the new school’s organizers claimed, citing the absence of an egalitarian *minyan* at CDS as proof positive that the school did not value true diversity of religious practice (Kay, 2009).

Among parents, there was an evenly balanced split of opinions when they were asked to describe CDS, with half responding that CDS impressed them as an open, “community” day school, and another half clearly identifying it as Orthodox. Students appeared to take a much different view, at least in the eyes of Leah Feldman. While passionate about the community character of CDS, she was disappointed to find that students overwhelmingly saw CDS in a different light. “They don’t care (about the

school's diversity). It is interesting. They perceive this school as Orthodox, not as a community (day school)" in its orientation.

What ideological parameters actually defined CDS? Several options emerged in the course of this study. Shirah Friedman, a relatively new faculty member with a strong intellectual bent, argued forcefully that CDS was "a community school that teaches from a Modern Orthodox perspective," a reality that she promptly declared to be "a total contradiction." Aviva Adler, an extremely thoughtful member of the teaching faculty, expressed exasperation when asked about what philosophy or identity characterized the school. "We like to talk about *klal yisrael* (an inclusive Jewish people), and that any child is welcomed here." Instead, she insisted, "We are a chameleon. Whatever leaf we land on we blend in." When Pearl Sagel, the parent of a Junior class boy spoke about the school's philosophy, she paused and reflected "there are so many...I have no idea what it is." If the school was neither a contradiction nor a chameleon, perhaps it was simply incoherent. When pressed on the matter, Mrs. Stein conceded that "I call it a community school knowing full well that the definition of community school means different things to different people."

At times, the school seemed to be suffering from what I began to call the chameleon's crisis. There were so many differences that deliberately coexisted within CDS that even a dedicated chameleon might soon grow weary of constantly reworking its colors. Yet, the mission of inclusion seemed to demand some kind of durable strategy to negotiate the breadth of different cultural assumptions and ritual needs that students and faculty brought with them. Who really counted as a Jew at CDS? Why weren't girls aloud to lead prayers? And why did the rabbis make such a fuss of seniors eating lunch

at McDonalds? At one point or another, faculty and students both had opportunity to chafe at the sense of dislocation that they experienced during such “chameleon” moments. The problem with the chameleon metaphor is that faculty had not desire to change their color, nor did they expect to convert their students. For many, building bridges was enough of an achievement to celebrate.

According to Rabbi Berman, one of the most important objectives that he sought in his teaching was simply the opportunity for students to have any relationship whatsoever with “a religious person...a green monster like myself.” Berman was thoughtful about what created the feeling that he described as “cultural divide” in his encounters with students. “It’s (my) identifying in an Orthodox way, which is a world of *mitzvos* (religious duties) and a God centered world, and that is a completely different world. So that’s like ‘Wow, you’re weird...You’re an alternative universe.’” As much as students might feel this way about faculty, the reverse could also be true. After the first Shabbat-long retreat with CDS students, the religiously punctilious Rabbi Oren confessed that he was pained by his students’ disregard for the Shabbat observances that he adhered to with such joy. He discussed his sense of dislocation and disconnection from his students, as well as a very significant fear that he himself might let his guard down and come to accept such laxity on Shabbat. In both cases it, it took significant energy to continue working across the boundary which separated the Black Hat world of the faculty from the more secular world of students. While Rabbi Fine saw a clear divide between himself and his students, others like Leah Feldman celebrated her secular students’ challenges. For her, the tension between the pious “*Bais Ya’akov*” (a Black Hat

seminary for ultra-Orthodox girls) side of her personality and the freewheeling woman who went to Broadway shoes was exhilarating.

For others, the tension of working at CDS was harder to handle. Jacob Greenwald, chairman of the Jewish history department, was as religiously committed as any of the staff members, but broke from the strict, party-line of the Black Hat community when it came to matters of historiography. He was embroiled in a long standing argument with faculty from the Jewish studies department after he challenged the historical accuracy of several Biblical accounts. Students became involved as well, with some of them approaching their religious studies teachers to ask if the Book of Esther really took place or if it were a fictional narrative. While the most conservative members of the Jewish studies department were livid, Greenwald insisted upon “academic integrity” and declared with some certainty that “Being in tension is expected. There has to be tension.”

Whether the source of these “chameleon-like” moments stemmed from diverse standards of ritual observance, differing theologies or simply the allure of a good intellectual argument, each of the school’s faculty members developed their own way of reconciling a sense of tension. Mrs. Stein insisted that a commitment to true acceptance of other opinions meant that she maintained her own beliefs on any given religious matter while at the same time accepting that for other individuals “there are different access roads, and that the access roads work differently for different people.” By contrast, Rabbi Warren declared that all viewpoints should be welcomed and every opinion heard. Still, Warren ultimately “accepted everyone’s right to be wrong” if they believed something incorrect. While both Stein and Warren’s response removed the potential for

conflict by allowing all parties to maintain their views, it's important to note that both views insulated CDS from potential ideological conflicts. In Stein's view, ideology was personalized and thus rendered so subjective that one need not quarrel over differences. To Warren, ideology was elevated to such a great degree that disagreement would be useless. If it was acceptable to be wrong, then there was no point in arguing who might be right.

Rabbi Fine adopted a third approach to dealing with the school's cultural and ideological heterogeneity. At CDS' high school graduation, I noticed that Fine had reserved a seat at the very end of the row in the faculty section of Sha'arey Hesed's main sanctuary. While the opening ceremony was taking place, he sat patiently but rose to leave the room when two teenage girls approached the podium to speak, in keeping with a practice of the more extreme elements of the Black Hat community which forbid men from listening to women's voices lest they become sexually aroused. Rabbi Fine's choice of seating seemed quite deliberate and his exit well timed. My field notes from that evening offer the following interpretation:

This was an act of participating while remaining separate—joining while at the same time drawing boundaries and standing apart. I'm struck by the duality. This small but deft move suggests a larger pattern that many staff play, be it physically, religiously or intellectually... (it appears that) CDS is a place where everyone is made uncomfortable for some amount of time. Where everyone is not quite at home. Where everyone has to selectively opt-out on occasion as part and parcel of their belonging to the larger group.

Across all three positions, there was a clear common thread. All parties made the primary assumption that belonging to the greater collective of CDS was important. The value of belonging motivated all parties to invest significant energies in their efforts to include others and remain included. The chameleon's crisis of "what to become next in

order to fit in” was a challenge that need not ever be resolved. Dealing with a sense of dislocation or the angst that resulted from juggling different beliefs might simply be the price of inclusion in a very complicated community. Given the efforts that all parties invested in the name of inclusion, it was important for this study to address one additional reality in the life of CDS. Despite the best efforts of all parties, there were undeniable moments when certain individuals felt varying degrees of outright exclusion from the broad embrace of CDS.

Insiders and Outsiders

At the start of the academic year, the entire faculty of CDS gathered for the school’s faculty in-service week. Teachers showed up in their finest outfits, rested from summer and eager to re-engage with one another in preparation for the return of students. Mrs. Stein began the morning by greeting faculty members at the doorway. As they arrived, she asked each teacher specific questions about their relatives, embracing one who had lost a parent, kissing another who had just become a grandmother. It seems as if Stein’s head was chock full of personal information about each of her staff that she effortlessly retrieved as they passed by. She did not miss a beat. After refreshments and a tremendous amount of chatter, the faculty gathered in the Elementary School auditorium for an assembly that kicked off the morning. Stein spoke at length about the coming year, the latest thinking in educational theory and especially about CDS’ legendary mission of embracing all Jews. At close of her remarks, she introduced the Rabbi and spiritual leader of Sha’arey Hesed. The faculty instinctively rose out of respect for Rabbi Warren, who would speak next. What happened next was a minor shock.

In the world of Black Hat Orthodoxy, there is a deeply honored custom of rising in order to show honor for religious leaders. During my year of field work, I participated in an educators' conference within the Black Hat community at which hundreds of men and women (seated separately) jumped to their feet to show their respect for a distinguished rabbi as he approached the podium. The same custom had taken root at CDS as well. On the frequent occasions when a rabbi, a visiting speaker and certainly when Mrs. Stein addressed the high school division, the entire school rose in a well rehearsed ritual of greeting. While the custom was well known to me, I had never worked in a place where the practice was so deeply ingrained or widely observed by all members of the community, including students. So when Rabbi Warren approached the podium, I naturally rose to my feet along with the crowd. Rabbi Avraham Siler did not. Siler had grown up in the Black Hat world of Yeshivah Orthodoxy; indeed, his father was a teacher in a small but distinguished seminary for boys. Siler was terse in his comments and often critical about CDS and its approach to religious life. He described himself as "old school" in his teaching style and conservative in his religious outlook. And at this moment, as Rabbi Warren approached the podium, he was conspicuously seated.¹⁹⁰ In the etiquette of the Black Hat world, it was a flagrant snub. But just what exactly did it mean?

Over the course of a full year, I heard faculty members speak about CDS in a range of ways. Some felt that the expectations of their time were inappropriate. Others griped that they were underpaid or that benefits were not generous enough. None of this was a surprise; it's standard fare for faculty room chat in any school. There was,

¹⁹⁰ To be precise, Rabbi Siler rose a single inch from his seat, then leaned back in place.

however, an additional thread of discussion that I have never seen before in the form of an ongoing faculty narrative about the religious legitimacy of the school. Rabbi Pearl confided that many friends in the Black Hat world questioned the appropriateness of his teaching at CDS, given its break from traditional ritual norms. Pearl seemed to agree, commenting that the families who sent their kids to CDS “are wonderful people” but at the same time “it breaks my heart that I can’t have my kids in their school.” Among the faculty, only Leah Feldman enrolled her children in CDS’s program while others passed up a very lucrative benefit by sending their children to schools that were more conservative in their religious outlook. Rabbi Oren made explicit statements about his refusal to buy into CDS’ inclusive vision, describing it as “*treif*” (unacceptable) and even sharing jokes that his friends at synagogue made. “Oh, you can drive (to services on Shabbat), you teach at CDS.” It was, “all in good fun,” Oren assured me. But fun or not, it reflected a pattern of Orthodox faculty who refused to fully invest in the complex reality that came as part and parcel of CDS’ mission.

Black Hat faculty members were not the only ones who voiced a feeling of disassociation from CDS. Rabbi Simon Levi was one of the few non-Orthodox Jews who taught ancient Israelite history and Biblical criticism at CDS. Trained in the Reform movement, he later went on to earn a Ph.D. in comparative religion and lectured broadly across the United States. While Levi’s credentials were exquisite, he was never quite certain about the role he should play at CDS. Despite his advanced academic degrees, he received a cool welcome from the rabbis in the Jewish studies department. As an intellectual who taught a critical and historical approach to the development of Jewish tradition, he expressed a sense that CDS had delegated this content to him as the resident

“outsider.” His scholarly background, liberal orientation and commitment to feminism created what he described as an “otherizing experience” which excluded him from deeper connections with colleagues with whom he might have otherwise shared much in common. In the course of my interview with Levi, it was clear that the limits which CDS placed upon religious life were sometimes stifling for him. Despite his professional skills as a religious leader, Levi was not allowed to lead a *minyan* at CDS in which male and female students participated equally. Levi bristled at the inequity, and the normally soft spoken intellectual made a point of banging the table in frustration as he spoke about this state of affairs during his interview with me. While he appreciated what CDS tried to accomplish, Levi often felt that he was “not in my own space” while working at the school.

Students expressed their own sense of disconnection. Some found it difficult to relate to the academic program that CDS offered, a dual track that divided students into either “*masoret*” (tradition) or “*limud*” (inquiry) track classes. The “*masoret*” track largely focused on traditional Hebrew sources like Bible and Talmud, while the “*limud*” track included Biblical texts studied in English alongside a hefty dose of philosophy, ethics and basics of Jewish practice. While the dual tracks were intended to offer content that was appropriate for students with different levels of textual Hebrew skills, the arrangement often backfired. My first indication that something was amiss came during my first week of formal teaching, a core part of my professional role at CDS. After our first few classes, a student with strong academic skills but limited Hebrew approached me with a request to transfer out of my “*limud*” track class into the “*masoret*” track, which suited her traditional philosophy better. When I related this to my Black Hat colleagues,

they congratulated me. Apparently, Hebrew levels were not the only difference between the two curricular tracks. During one interview, parents bluntly rejected the school's nomenclature, instead referring to the division between the "religious or the non-religious track." They explained that students really picked their classes based upon their level of observance and complained that the "non-religious" track lacked academic quality or rigor. "It's like you're just not... you're just not worthy of being bothered with" if you are enrolled in that track.

Other students expressed much more serious complaints about the content of the *limud* track. A potentially explosive incident occurred in one classroom where the teacher handed out an article written from an extreme viewpoint within the Black Hat community, suggesting that the Holocaust had taken place as a Divine punishment for the decision by modern European Jewish communities across Europe to abandon traditional ritual observance. Elaine Epstein, the director of Jewish studies for the high school was distraught.

So, here we are giving an article to students who don't follow traditional practice at home, and we are telling them that they are responsible for the Holocaust. That if they had been a Jew back then, the same way they are now, they would be responsible...and that their practices are going to be responsible for the next Holocaust. (That) is essentially what we are telling them.

After students were assigned this article, they started speaking to other faculty, voicing anger at the idea that their approach to Jewish life was somehow so faulty that God would inflict some punishment. What troubled Epstein most was that the beliefs of the author were not even in the mainstream of Orthodoxy. While the article was wholly unacceptable to her, it nonetheless still sat atop a pile of papers on her desk for several weeks. It was her "to do" pile. She was reluctant to confront the teacher who had

assigned it, fearful that her rebuke would add insult to injury. Apparently, it wasn't the first time this teacher had crossed the line in his classroom by raising issues that created hurt feelings among students. For students, it sent the message that non-observant Jews, the same ones who CDS worked so hard to welcome, were not really respected, and hence, not really included in the faculty's idea of community.

On rare occasions, the feeling of exclusion went beyond disagreements about belief or ritual choices. One particular account, centered on the morning prayer services, cut deeply and painfully to the quick of teachers' discomfort with the demands of inclusion as well as CDS students' own sense of vulnerability. At CDS, each day began with morning *minyan*, the prayer service that traditional Jews participated in three times each day. While students were sometimes less than enthusiastic about group prayer, no one suggested that there was anything unusual about beginning the day with services. "After all," Rabbi Fine pointed out, "every movement in Judaism believes in *dovvening* (Yiddish for prayer)."¹⁹¹ In order to meet the needs of different groups, CDS created a number of *minyanim*—prayer groups that ranged in size from large to intimate. Some offered a healthy amount of discussion in addition to worship, while other *minyanim* devoted themselves to prayer with varying degrees of commitment ranging from piety to rote recitation. While there was no *minyan* that combined boys and girls in an egalitarian, gender neutral setting, Mrs. Stein personally developed an all-girls *minyan* that was designed to allow egalitarian girls who formerly attended the progressive Solomon Schechter across town to use their well developed Hebrew skills in order to lead services for same gender peers. It was an elite group, with participation by direct

¹⁹¹ Hyman (2008) claimed that prayer was one of the most inherently conflicted and least well contextualized aspects of non-Orthodox day schools. As such, it was no surprise that one of the most painful disagreements that my field work revealed centered on this experience.

invitation from Mrs. Stein alone. Membership in this group was generally regarded as one of the most prestigious accomplishments that a girl could achieve at CDS.

Among the boys, it was a smaller group which provoked enough controversy that multiple parents reported their distress during interviews. They each described an incident which occurred a year prior to my field work. According to traditional Jewish Law, a quorum of ten males age thirteen or older is required in order to recite some of the most important prayers of the morning service. Without a *minyan*, the service could certainly proceed, but parts of the service would be abbreviated and others, like the *kaddish* (a prayer that proclaims God's sanctity) would be skipped. Most Jews regard the *kaddish* as one of the more powerful sections of the morning service, and even Jews with little religious commitment have a sense of reverence for this prayer. While this prayer is repeated several times during prayer services, a *minyan* customarily concludes with a special version known as the *kaddish yatom* or mourners' prayer that was designated to memorialize close relatives. In the year prior to my research, Rabbi Pearl led *minyan* for a group in which one boy's father had passed away several years prior. This child came to school on the anniversary of his father's death, known in Yiddish as the *yahrtzeit*, expecting to say *kaddish* as a way of remembering his departed parent. As prayers took place, it was apparent that something was amiss. Rabbi Pearl began skipping certain sections of the service that would usually be said in a *minyan*. As services closed, the child rose to say *kaddish*, but Rabbi Pearl insisted that the prayer could not be said. Eyes darted around the room as students looked and counted. Certainly there was a *minyan*—at least twelve boys were present, including the teacher. Yet Rabbi Pearl held fast—no

kaddish. The entire group was plunged into a fury, the bereaved son out of anger that he could not memorialize his deceased father. For others, it was even worse.

While it is impossible to know exactly how Pearl made his decision, the consensus among the group was deeply disturbing. As students counted off among one another, they compared each other's background and affiliations. Several belonged to Orthodox congregations, while an equal number affiliated with a more progressive, non-Orthodox institution. Rightly or wrongly, the group concluded that Pearl did not consider them to be Jewish, at least not Jewish enough for him to say this particular prayer with them. For these students, enrolled in a school that promised inclusion based upon a shared Jewish identity, it was a moment of paramount invalidation that penetrated to the very essence of their being. In the students' eyes, if you were not Orthodox, then perhaps the black hats believed that you weren't really Jewish at all. You just didn't belong.

Rabbi Berman summed up the students' feelings bluntly. "(They feel that) we *possul* them," he noted, using a Yiddish word which suggested that CDS students believed the faculty viewed them as invalid or inauthentic. "They view it as like a religious Christian would view a Jew...like he's going to hell, and we are trying to save their souls type of thing...Their perception is we are trying to convert them and brainwash them." Berman was not the only one to reflect this feeling on the part of students. Linda Klein, the Admissions Director, related an example of a non-Jewish teacher who opened up debate about school and identity with her students. "At CDS you have lots of choices," she argued. "We don't really," one student replied, "they want us to become Orthodox." Harriet Silverman, CDS' Student Life Director, shared a similar sentiment among students that "we're not really being a hundred percent honest about our

mission.” When Orthodox rituals or philosophical positions predominated, students felt that this approach to life was being “thrust upon them.” If they did not accept these ideals or adopt these ritual practices, students often concluded that they were not fully accepted by the faculty.

Modeling Patterns of Culture: A Second Look

Two conflicting dynamics framed the contours of CDS’ cultural landscape. One dynamic was a desire for broad inclusivity and an open community, while the other was a perceived preference for specific patterns of ritual behavior. The incongruity of these two dynamics led to recurrent experiences of disaffection or outright exclusion. CDS asserted the bold and overarching principle that all Jewish individuals should be respected and welcomed within a single community even as they choose different “access roads” to Jewish life. And yet, these differences by definition guaranteed that divergent notions of culture, ritual and belief would come to define the totality of CDS. The result was an unavoidable need to constantly manage tensions which arose from the inherent instability of the cultural mix of CDS’ core population of teachers and students.

In response, those who made some of the most important decisions which shaped the life of CDS placed an inclusive vision at the center, while strategically deferring engagement regarding beliefs or practices that might divide the school into conflicting groups. In cases of irreconcilable differences of ritual practice, neutral institutional norms came to the forefront and usually worked to provide practical guidelines for peaceful coexistence between the Black Hat faculty and their diverse student body. The administration guided faculty to avoid clashes of belief and attempted to squelch discussions that might threaten students’ sense of their own validity and acceptance

within CDS. Despite this effort, both faculty and students occasionally seemed to be just one step away from conflict. And yet, there was a notable and irrefutable sense of togetherness that permeates the school's identity, a commitment to continuing the engagement despite obvious disagreements between all parties. Stepping back from the intensity of student and faculty culture, several patterns of interaction emerge, each of which fits squarely within the theoretical literature which frames this project. As I will argue, below, the cultural life of CDS was certainly complicated, but from a sociological and ethnographic standpoint, it was far from incoherent.

Participation, reification and cultural alignment

Etienne Wenger's (1999) work on communities of practice offers a durable frame for understanding the dynamics which make life at CDS complicated. Wenger argues that aspects of practice naturally serve as a core and legitimizing component of communal experience. Further, he described an inherent tendency of communities to "reify" certain core behaviors by legitimating shared activities which mark their practitioners as fully included actors within the framework of a broadly conceptualized cultural community. The challenge which confronted CDS was the community's ambiguity about locating elements of practice at the core of the community's identity. In Wenger's terms, CDS defied the basic laws that govern communal organization from the very outset of their attempts to gather proponents of different and incompatible practices together under one roof. Indeed, my first reading of the experiences of actors within CDS included the notion that the school was simply an incoherent aggregation of divergent individuals with no larger, shared purpose. Where issues relating to conflicts

of practice did arise, my field work demonstrates that these issues consistently exerted a disruptive impact on the sense of the school's cohesiveness.

While it is clear that the reality of hetero-praxis which was constitutive of CDS' parameters for participation in the school community invited tension and disconnect among its members, there are other avenues for constructing a notion of shared cultural space. In addition to the ideas of practice and reification, Wenger described a phenomenon which he describes as "alignment."

The process of alignment bridges time and space to form broader enterprises so that participants become connected through the coordination of their energies, actions and practices. Through alignment, we become part of something big because we do what it takes to play our part. What alignment brings into the picture is a scope of action writ large or coordinated enterprise on a large scale... (Wenger, 1999, pp. 178-9)

The notion of alignment pushes the phenomenon of reification one step further, advancing beyond an individual's sense of conformity with group norms and approaching a totalizing cultural picture. Since Wenger's research around communities of practice was grounded in a corporate structure that had no deep ideological basis for its existence, he theorized about a process of alignment that derived all of its legitimacy from the realm of action. By contrast, when leaders like Stein and Warren lauded the inclusiveness of CDS, they were invoking a claim of ideological alignment as opposed to alignment by way of praxis. The analytic frame of Wenger's work allows us to pose a more precise question: Does CDS develop a sense of ideological alignment that is sufficiently powerful to offset the disruptive influence of divergent practice? To make a well theorized statement about CDS, we must look further at the ideational grounding of the entire enterprise by asking what values, symbols and core beliefs the students and faculty shared. I will return to this question in the next section of this chapter.

Group and Grid

In addition to Wenger's work, I invoked the cultural maps of group and grid, as described by Mary Douglas (1970). Douglas updated her cultural taxonomy over several years, eventually developing a system that posited four typological communities that were characterized by a combination of strong or weak group and grid behavior (Douglas, 1982). E. L. Harris (1995) was one of several scholars who drew upon Douglas' cultural schema to describe a number of schools including, fortuitously, a Jewish day school that asserted vigorous standards of ritual practice alongside a warm and purposefully embracing community. E. L. Harris located this school within Douglas' schema as a "corporate" institution, as it placed a very high value on "grid" factors such as the value of rabbis and a responsibility to conform to Jewish values and practices, as well as a tightly constructed definition of the "group" that school leaders created by stressing an environment of family and community.

Douglas' categories of group and grid provide an important touchstone for CDS. Based upon the religious commitments of the school's faculty and the tight knit character of Woodville's Jewish community, one would expect CDS to appear similar to the school that E. L. Harris profiled. Indeed, the faculty showed many signs of acting in exactly this "corporate" fashion by asserting the inclusive character of the larger group as well as assuming a strong and shared ritual grid as a basis for their work with students. Ultimately, that assumption misfired. Not only were the faculty's assumed gridlines not shared with their students, but in some cases, the enforcement of strong grid-based ritual standards was actually destructive to the school's larger sense of group. The experience of students who found that they did not count in the school's prayer group makes the

point quite strikingly, as it represents a case where students' most basic sense of belonging to the group was threatened. While one could reasonably argue that CDS best represented a "high group-low grid" profile within Douglas' framework, further reading of E. L. Harris' study makes it clear that such a designation is wholly inappropriate. The one high group-low grid school which E. L. Harris identified took on a collectivist tone that limited student autonomy and downplayed the importance of any student initiative against the larger welfare of the collective health of, in this case, a fundamentalist Christian school. By comparison, CDS remains a high-group, high-grid school with strong communal bonds, respect for individual autonomy and loyalty to a core organizing principle. The challenge for this research will be to answer the question: If ritual standards did not orient the larger grid of value norms at CDS, then just what ideals and expectations were shared in common?

A Taxonomy of Community

Strike (2003) offered a final analytical framework that can help lead us towards a meaningful statement about the character of community that CDS experienced. As I described in Chapter Three, Strike delineates the models of a tribe, a congregation, an orchestra and a family as working models for school communities.

Tribes grow out of "shared consciousness and shared identity...not just bonds of mutual regard or attachment." By sharing beliefs and common practices, members of the same tribe develop "common identities...rooted in these shared understandings" (Strike, 2003, p. 75). Given such deep roots of identity as shared belief, practice and world view, tribe members are tightly bound together by "social glue" that creates a high degree of mutual transparency. The tribe is an intensely loyal social group, yet at the same time,

tribes are the most likely to exclude or stigmatize, to show intolerance or to control the autonomous choices of individual members.

By contrast, Strike (2003) argued that congregations order themselves around shared beliefs even in the absence of shared practice. The structure of a congregational community is much more open than a tribe, since one need only buy in to the community's articles of faith in order to belong. Furthermore, shared beliefs about values and societal "goods" bind people in ways that forestall potential conflicts since these beliefs fully displace practice as the central reference point of the congregational community.

A corollary dynamic governs the Orchestra. Orchestras are defined by shared practices even though members of this unit may hold no beliefs in common. To paraphrase Strike, as long as the conductor is waving her baton, the orchestra responds as a tightly focused unit. Once the music has concluded, members of the orchestra dissolve their "bonds of practice," pack up their instruments and go their separate ways.

The final model of educational community is the family, which exists by association and does not require any deep ideational bond or core of shared practice. Families can exist based upon little more than happenstance and the idea that all members of the family ought to remain connected. While families are highly inclusive structures, Strike (2003) underscores the degree to which families are a "thin" community. While relatively insulated from ideological strife, members of "family" communities do not form deeply grounded bonds. Lacking a durable basis in belief or practice, families are limited in their ability to achieve common purposes, one of the most important "goods" that Strike attributes to a strong educational community.

Within these defining parameters, it is clear the CDS can not claim to model its interactions on the dynamic of an orchestra, as there was simply no shared aspect of practice to frame the boundaries of community. Indeed, CDS appears to have gone to great lengths to avoid engaging the issue of divergent practice as evidenced by patterns of deferral and legal fiction that I detailed above. We should recall that one of the advantages of an orchestra is its ability, albeit on a temporary basis, to transcend divisions of belief or ideology. Given the differences of belief between CDS' largely secular students and its "God centered" faculty, it might make sense to employ an "orchestra" or "practice centered" model as a way of bridging the ideational divide between these two groups. Such an attempt would be well grounded in Lave's (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lave, 1993) claim that practice is always situated or contextualized. Accordingly, two individuals could logically engage in the same action while meaning two separate things. A prayer that for one man might evoke feelings of transcendence might, for the other, simply be pretty poetry. The act of saying the same words could come to be "valued" in different ways. Surprisingly, CDS did not exploit the possibility of organizing itself around shared practices with situated (and hence divergent) meanings often enough. Instead of describing shared practices, faculty and parents more often reported the faculty's ongoing concern with divergent practice in ways that rendered the orchestra model inoperative.

If CDS could not claim to exist as a community on the model of an orchestra, then it is equally impossible to describe the school as a tribe. Furthermore, it seemed that whatever potential for over-arching community did exist at CDS was at times threatened by tribal dynamics. The members of CDS' faculty were clearly a tribe. In addition to

common language, they shared core beliefs, common religious practices and, in Strike's (2003) terms, were almost fully "transparent" to one another in understanding the meaning of each other's actions. At the same time, CDS students and their parents were mostly not members of the same tribe. I have already noted the potential to exclude or stigmatize outsiders or non-conforming members as one of the most important disadvantages of the tribe as an educational community. To the extent that students on occasion perceived themselves to be excluded or stigmatized by the actions of a tightly bound faculty, I argue that tribal dynamics exerted considerable power in disrupting other potential models for shared community at CDS. While I will return to this dynamic at the conclusion of the chapter; at present it is sufficient to note that the shared interactions of faculty and students at CDS in no way conformed to Strike's notion of a common tribe.

Two final typologies of congregation and family remain, and both had the potential for serving as viable models of community at CDS. The model of family offered some promise due to the fact that this model was open enough to contain the breadth of beliefs and practices which came together at CDS. As a typology, family does not make any demands of coherence or rationality. No common practices or shared core beliefs are required to substantiate the bonds of family. While this model is certainly inclusive, it begs the question of whether anyone would ever want to actively seek membership in such a community. As Strike (2003) noted, families are remarkably thin models of community, and schools which exist as families are extremely limited in their ability to generate the shared "goods" or achieve the larger common purposes that make communal participation worthwhile. With such limited benefits, it is unclear why anyone would seek to join an educational community that worked like a family.

Finally, the congregation suggests itself as a logical model due to the fact that it avoids issues of practice, drawing its coherence from shared articles of belief. While this element alone makes the congregation a notable model for CDS, one problem remains. Strike, citing Rawls (1993), pointed to a “comprehensive religious, philosophical or moral doctrine” (Strike, 2003, p. 75) as the basis of an educational community which functions as a congregation. If issues of religious belief were just as contested as those of practice, then just what basic philosophy or doctrine grounded CDS?

Out of Strike’s taxonomy of community structures, only the family or the congregation offer much promise in helping us to understand the complicated landscape of CDS. To reach some final statement about which of these models is most appropriate, we must answer one simple question. Despite the multiplicity of cultural practices which pervaded the life of CDS, did faculty and students share any core purpose, ideal or set of beliefs in common?

The Mission Driven School

One of the most fascinating questions that emerged during my field work was the basic issue of CDS’ mission. Just what did the school intend to accomplish? What was its larger objective as an institution, and was that objective shared by all parties? In reviewing hundreds of pages of interview transcripts as well as several notebooks filled with field notes, a number of trends suggested themselves.

Instrumental objectives

At several points, evidence from field work suggested a significant divide between CDS’ stated objectives and the motivations of families who attended. Several

individuals argued that there was no overarching reason for Sha'arey to have opened its lavishly funded high school to the broader community except for economic ones. Laura Steiner, the parent of a Junior at CDS, unflinchingly argued that CDS was an Orthodox school, but suggested the administration was willing "to be more diverse" so that they could generate enough enrollment to sustain the entire enterprise. Remarks by the director of admissions, Linda Klein, further underscored the sense that CDS had a vested interest in broadening their base. Klein noted that many families chose CDS after comparing the school to two other established Woodville prep schools...each of which charged nearly \$24,000 for enrollment in their high school programs, several thousands of dollars above the tuition charged by CDS. These families "never imagined that they would be sending their child to a Jewish day school," but found themselves welcomed nonetheless. Finally, there were some parents who came to CDS in order to avoid Woodville's successful but racially diverse public school. As Mrs. Stein explained, "We have 8th graders who are public school bound. When the high school tells them they are going to be put in the lower grouping, the parents flip out. 'Lower group' is a code word for black."

For these families, their interest in CDS had no relationship to the essential and stated mission of CDS, namely, the goal of building a learning community that welcomes Jews from religiously diverse backgrounds. For these households, the draw of a high quality academic program with some degree of cultural homogeneity served as the primary reason for choosing this high school. In these cases, I describe the motives of parents and students as "instrumental," since their reason for attending CDS was divorced from the school's core mission. I have already discussed the school's tendency to defer

or avoid certain issues of ritual practice, a pattern which could clearly be understood as “instrumental” as well. In Mrs. Stein’s words, “We’re not going to turn this school into a *yeshivah* . It’s not our goal. This is a community school. It’s (religiously) broad...and there’s competition!” In short, Stein was cautious not to create an atmosphere that would be so religiously intense that it would cost CDS valuable enrollments and tuition dollars. Apparently, the administration of CDS had instrumental goals of its own.

While a number of parents and administrators discussed motives for some families’ participation in the life of CDS that were peripheral to the school’s mission, faculty held a far different perspective. Faculty members in the Jewish studies department uniformly expressed reasons for working at CDS that were idealistic, mission driven and grounded in a sense of ideological purpose. At the same time, it was tremendously difficult to develop an overarching sense of this mission due to the fact that reports from faculty were broad and inconsistent. Some argued that the core purpose of CDS was to create a genuinely pluralistic community, while others felt that the school had a special mission to deepen patterns of affiliation among non-Orthodox Jews. There was even a small minority who argued that CDS’ purpose was to help broaden the mindset of the Modern Orthodox community as a whole. Ultimately, three visions of institutional purpose emerged as the goals most commonly cited by the largest number of administrators, teachers and parents at CDS. These visions offered the nearest thing to a “comprehensive religious, philosophical or moral doctrine” that informed the lives and lived experiences of CDS faculty, parents and students.

Sensitizing Non-Orthodox Children

As faculty spoke with me about the defining features of CDS, individuals often referenced the goal of sensitizing children to traditional Judaism. Rabbi Berman, the same teacher who claimed that his students saw him as a “green monster” for living a “God-centered life,” described a moving interaction that he had with a teenage girl in the context of one Jewish studies class. Berman had just finished teaching a Talmudic text that discussed humanity’s response to evil in the world.¹⁹² After a long class discussion, one of Berman’s students approached him to say thank you. She had lost her father at a young age, and took comfort from the class discussion. Berman left with a sense that, even though they lived in different worlds, he could offer her something meaningful in her life.

Aviva Adler shared a far different story of a student who sat down on the first day of her class and announced “I go to *treif* (non-kosher) restaurants on Shabbat,” just to break Jewish law. Adler smiled, replied “OK, that’s your choice” and went back to teaching. Adler described her student’s comment as a pre-emptive strike, lobbed by a very secular young woman who feared that her teacher would look down upon her for not observing the rituals of Shabbat and *kashrut*. In the end, the young woman came over Adler’s house for Passover that year...and the next as well. Rather than looking at observance as a boundary line which separated her from others, Adler’s student maintained her own principled secularism but, at the same time, was able to appreciate aspects of religious tradition by including religiously observant teachers and peers in her world.

¹⁹² “A person is obligated to acknowledge God when evil befalls him just as much as when something good happens.” Talmud Bavli, Megillah 25a.

On numerous occasions, faculty described interpersonal relationships with students that either debunked negative stereotypes that they held regarding the Orthodox community, or perhaps just opened up a deeper human connection with one of the “green monsters.” Two encounters which took place during the year of my field work were particularly notable. As part of my research, I often sat in on Leah Feldman’s Bible class to listen, take notes and sample the range of student banter. Feldman’s prize student was a bright Junior who argued respectfully but incessantly with her on any given day. Adam was fond of pointing out contradictions and insisted that human progress made Biblical literature seem archaic or even offensive. Following the weekend of her class’s visit for Shabbat lunch, I interviewed Feldman to ask how things went. After describing who attended, table talk, what the kids wore and confessing that she had no idea where they actually parked their cars, Feldman mentioned that Adam had sent her an email after the gathering to say thank you. Adam added the following: “Any vestige of alienation from my Jewish roots that existed, you eradicated.” Adam told Feldman that the discussions and debates they shared in class “made his Judaism come alive for him and made him think ...in ways that he had not (considered) before.”

Among CDS faculty, these “tales of success” were traded like soldiers swap war stories, with pride of achievement and affirmation for the justness of their cause. It fascinated me to observe that faculty mostly did not push to change, to convince or to indoctrinate their students, just to foster an appreciation for Judaism as a way of life.

This facet of CDS’ culture stands in stark contrast to other religiously oriented schools. Alan Peshkin’s (1986) well known chronicle of the “Bethany” school painted the portrait of a Christian institution whose faculty were no less pious or religiously

committed than the Black Hat instructors at CDS. Unlike CDS, Bethany's faculty enforced student conformity with religious expectations regarding daily worship, church attendance and even modesty of dress. While less focused on religious instruction, the Islamic day school that Nasir (2004) described made core religious values central to the life of the "Bilalian Islamic School" in ways that went far beyond CDS' attempts to promote religious doctrine. By contrast, the goals of Jewish studies faculty at CDS were much simpler and more loosely defined. Rabbi Fine, the white bearded star of the senior class video, made it clear that he had no desire to transform his students into devoutly observant Jews.

My definition of *keruv* (reaching out and affecting religious transformation) is to facilitate growth for someone. To go from where they are to where they could be. I don't see myself as the final rung on the ladder, the final step on the way. Just to get them one step further, and that is different for everybody. That is how I understand *keruv*.

Rabbi Warren offered the clearest rationale for avoiding the goal of indoctrination when he observed that "there is a large segment (of students) for whom it should not be our goal (to change them religiously), because if it is, then we will always be failures." Many other faculty members expressed a similar sense that their mission was not to change or transform students. Inspiring a sense of sympathy or respect for tradition among disaffected Jewish teenagers was enough. In the opinion of Rabbi Pearl, the issue was far simpler. "Here, it's my job to keep kids Jewish."

Keeping them Jewish

In 1990, a demographic study of population trends within the American Jewish community shook the communal landscape by recording the dramatic numbers of Jews who had disengaged or disassociated themselves from ancestral ties to their people (UJC,

2001, 2003). While several data points from this survey troubled American Jewish leaders, the most serious findings were indications that Jews increasingly chose individuals from other religious backgrounds as their spouses or life partners. These households were especially prone to jettison ties with Jewish tradition and largely did not pass on core aspects of religious or cultural identity to their children. Increasingly, Jewish leaders began to speak about a demographic crisis and sought ways to respond. This imperative drew much of its plausibility from the communal idea that Jewish education reinforced the demographics of Jewish survival (Schoem, 1989). While not the only reason for the rise of the community day school movement, many American Jewish leaders who had previously opposed the creation of Jewish day schools now turned to this institution as a means to safeguard the demographic future of the non-Orthodox Jewish community (Wertheimer, 1999; Zeldin, 1988). As the leader of Sha'arey Hesed, Rabbi Warren had no hesitation about the sense of mission that he felt in opening his school to non-Orthodox children. In his words, "the survival of the Jewish people (was) dependent upon making non-Orthodox Jews religiously committed and observant," and in order to accomplish this, he had to bring them into CDS. The only other option, Warren mused, was a future in which all of non-Orthodox Jewry vanished and the only ones left "were dressed in black." Whether Warren's view was accurate or not is irrelevant. What matters is that faculty strongly believed that their efforts could impact the basic and underlying composition of the Jewish community. In one class that I observed, Rabbi Pearl led a discussion about Jewish-non-Jewish intermarriage in which he actually listed population figures broken out by religious denomination. He projected a collapse of Reform Judaism within a few generations, and pleaded with students to marry Jewish

partners.¹⁹³ During one of my frequent visits to observe Leah Feldman's class, the usually open minded and deferential Feldman turned fiercely didactic when the question of intermarriage arose. Like no other issue, the faculty of CDS showed a united front not just around the idea that intermarriage was bad. The faculty's commitment to promoting Jewish endogamy as a defense of the non-Orthodox community's demographic future became a compelling feature of CDS' institutional mission.

The level of intensity that faculty adopted when they spoke about this mission was impressive. In his interview, Rabbi Siler expressed little concern for the religious life of his students, nor did he insist that they learn too much at CDS beyond a basic familiarity with Jewish texts. Either way, he felt that they could "go off ... and be wonderful Jews." Still, he "hope(d) and praye(d) that they all marry Jews and that there (would be) another generation." Rabbi Fine expressed similar sentiments, wishing only that his students would leave CDS happy that they had been enrolled. After all, "it raises the chance that you will marry someone Jewish, and that they will send their children to a day school, CDS or otherwise."

While the faculty's passion for fighting intermarriage offered them strong ideological grounds for participating in an inclusive religious community, it remained a poor ideational basis for a community that included both faculty and students. The usually loquacious Shirah Friedman grew tentative and convoluted as she mused about how to discuss her opposition to intermarriage with a class in which at least a few current students had a non-Jewish parent. While quite a few of Leah Feldman's students chimed in agreement to her arguments against marrying a non-Jewish partner, others turned stony

¹⁹³ Later in the same class, Rabbi Pearl quipped, obviously in jest, "We have a problem of the Jewish community not having enough babies, so, go have babies. OK, wait until you're older, like 16 or 17."

and unresponsive as she argued that marriage to a non-Jewish partner would simply be “unsatisfying.” The following interchange from Rabbi Pearl’s class offered the most striking example of the potential disconnect between faculty and students in discussing intermarriage.

- (Rabbi Pearl) Look, there are no right or wrong answers. Is anything wrong with marrying a non-Jew?
- (Male student) I wouldn’t personally, but wouldn’t reprimand someone who did.
- (Female student) If you are brought up Reform, you might not care who the kids marry.
- (RP) Do some of you think there is something wrong with intermarriage?
- (Male) It goes against everything I was taught at CDS. You bring another religion into the home; you never know how it will change you.
- (Female) It takes me out of my comfort zone. I might not be able to talk about how I feel.
- (RP) So, what else is wrong with intermarriage? I’m going to bring up something really bad now. It’s that Jews are special, a chosen people.
- (Male) Just because of one verse that says we are an *am segulah* (special nation)?
- (RP) More like the entire Torah, actually. We have a mission. God chose us.
- (Female) Reform and unaffiliated Jews don’t know anything about Torah. They won’t listen.
- (RP) Bingo. That’s why we don’t talk about Torah reasons...
- (Male) I would be more hesitant to intermarry because of the first (two) problems, not because of the theological one...and if you tell me about religious reasons, it won’t change my mind.

Even though the commitment to prevent intermarriage offered the faculty a meaningful goal that defined their work, it impressed some students as merely one more sermon to endure. While students echoed some of the sociological concerns of their teachers, neither the theological nor the ideological underpinnings of their teachers’ arguments were all that compelling for them. For this reason, the commitment to protect the Jewish community from intermarriage clearly did not offer a set of core purposes, ideals or beliefs that were shared by faculty and students equally.

Developing Mutual Understanding

Beyond the agenda of sensitizing students to Jewish tradition and preventing intermarriage, the most frequent issue that all informants raised in describing CDS' mission was a near mythical quest for mutual understanding between Jews from different religious and cultural backgrounds. Mrs. Stein was surprisingly blunt in recognizing the barriers. "In the Jewish world you are defined...by what school you go to. You are defined by how you dress...what kind of *kippah* you wear...Very few people can remove themselves from the labels and categories." Parents felt this equally, and had a sense that Woodville's Orthodox community was a separate entity that was cut off from their daily lives. As Karen Kohlberg, the mother of one of Leah Feldman's star students, described the community from which CDS drew most of their Jewish studies faculty, she remarked "Wow, this is not quite my world." Some less ritually observant families like the Kohlbergs were intrigued by the aloof and very self-contained Black Hat world, and saw their participation in the life of CDS as a way of making basic human connections with individuals who otherwise seemed exotic for their piety and black suits. Describing her son's experiences with the Black Hat faculty at CDS, Kohlberg spoke pointedly about one of her son's favorite teachers. "(Adam's teacher is) funny, he's different...I think that for Adam a lot of the guys look like they're going to be straightforward...religious guys. They turn out to have the greatest sense of humor." They were also the faculty who showed up for drama rehearsals, soccer games and the ones who spent weekends away with CDS students at school events. Rabbi Oren remarked that his attendance at these games was deliberate, as it offered a way to build bridges with his students, and a chance for them to see him as a "normal guy."

While the mixing of religious and cultural worlds at CDS was an incidental element of the school for families like the Kohlbergs, others pointedly sought out an environment where Jews from many different backgrounds came together. Two parents who located themselves within the Modern Orthodox community disclosed that they specifically sought a broad and heterogeneous school environment for their children. In the case of Rabbi Lerner, he insisted on sending his children to a school in which they would be seen as simply “Jewish” and not confined to any one label that the larger community imposed. Another family left a warm and very supportive Orthodox school setting for CDS because “we were not comfortable with the homogeneous aspects of the school...families from...mostly one end of the spectrum religiously.”

According to Student Activities Director Sharon Berman, students seemed to connect with this mission as well. She described a process of growth that spanned the high school experience of young adults who gradually learned to include more and more people from different religious backgrounds in their social world. Along the way, students gained a better understanding of peers and were forced to actively negotiate around many different standards of diet, types of belief and levels of religious practice so that students could “incorporate each other into their lives in a meaningful way.” Berman was most pointed in describing the experience of children from Orthodox homes who went on from CDS to study in religious seminaries or colleges that hosted a more homogeneous community. “They have a hard time...because they say their Orthodox communities are very close-minded, and they’re used to having a very broad group of friends.” For these faculty members, parents and students, CDS was attractive precisely

because it offered a place where people from different religious backgrounds could cross boundaries.

A fascinating aspect of this boundary crossing was the institution of mentoring which clearly emerged as a sustained pattern of cultural interaction during the course of field work. Teachers like Feldman and Adler discussed how common it was for students to seek out a teacher for a connection that went far beyond the simple interactions of academic life. Feldman described some students who approached her as “part confidante and part big sister,” while Adler discussed purposeful choices that her department made, such as providing a couch in the Jewish studies office so that students would feel comfortable dropping in and hanging out with teachers. Epstein, the cheerful but no-nonsense Director of Jewish Studies, attracted the attention of her faculty because she “had the most diverse following” of students from different backgrounds. Clearly, the notion that teachers could have a “following,” not just “students,” was a distinctive aspect of CDS’ culture and one which proved to be both deliberate and grounded in a sense of institutional mission.

Several intriguing tales of mentoring emerged as part of field work, like Lia Roberts’ daughter who developed such a close bond with Rabbi Fine that “depending on the mood, she’ll either call him Santa Claus or the Lubavitcher Rebbee. He’s nonjudgmental...you can just talk to him like he’s a seventeen year old girl.” Other students felt this as well, like the teenage girl who shocked her friends by making an appointment with Rabbi Fine to discuss a dating problem. Brenda Kauffman, an assistant to the headmaster who knew this student well, shared that “She came back three days later, all excited. ‘(Rabbi Fine) gave me the best advice. I’m coming to him with all my

problems now!’ You know, you wouldn’t think of going to this man that looks so *frum* (pious) about a dating question!’” The key in each of these cases, as reported by parents and faculty members, was that they offered students a non-judgmental space to form relationships.

Along the way, students developed a deeper connection with and understanding of their Black Hat faculty members. Even if students did not personally buy into the numerous restrictions of diet or the responsibilities of daily prayer, these patterns of observant life came to be simply one more part of the broad cultural landscape for CDS students. On occasion, students availed themselves of this access point to explore the world of Black Hat Orthodoxy. Some adopted new ritual practices and a few even changed the way they dressed to appear more modest. In these cases, the role of faculty mentors became tremendously important in the lives of students, who sometimes called upon their teachers to guide them or help resolve conflicts that their newfound observance might have prompted. For some, exposure to the Black Hat community of their faculty mentors allowed them to dabble with the culture and practices of this world even though they had no interest in becoming “more religious.” Mrs. Epstein recalled one particular CDS graduate, an intelligent teenager who was not at all ritually observant and, indeed, was habitually in trouble for not wearing the required *kippah* in the building. “He wrote his senior thesis on (Epstein laughs) the value of being *shomer negiah* (not touching a member of the opposite sex until marriage). I almost choked. His girlfriend was one of the prettiest girls in the grade!” What was intriguing about all of these cases was the freedom that some students felt to be eclectic in their choice of relationships with peers, with faculty and even with Jewish ritual. From the perspective of Wenger (1998)

and Lave (1993), this willingness to play with ritual is incredibly important, as it allowed simultaneous fluidity of practice and meaning. For faculty, parents and students, the freedom to seek common ground by engaging in this kind of cultural boundary crossing was a lived reflection of all parties' shared ideals about CDS.

If CDS was geared towards encouraging students to cross cultural boundary lines, then it clearly succeeded in encouraging a large number to become familiar with the Black Hat world. But was this encounter mutual? Just how much did faculty enter their students' world? Rabbi Warren clearly treasured the opportunity to do so. Mrs. Stein confided that every once in a while he would sit her down in front of a television and say "this is what our kids are watching. How is our curriculum relevant to these kids?" At CDS' graduation ceremony, it was Warren who praised the Black Eyed Peas, a hip hop band that many students enjoyed, for holding concerts in Israel at the same time as some Jewish entertainers criticized the State's policies. Warren clearly went out of his way as an Orthodox Rabbi to share experiences and cultural reference points with CDS students. Others were wary about crossing this boundary. When I asked Rabbi Fine about his taste in movies, he offered that the last one he saw was "five years ago." Others, like Rabbi Pearl, declared most films to be "not kosher" enough for his tastes...so he needed extra help in selecting clips to show in his class. Out of the entire faculty, it seemed that only Aviva Adler (the sponsor of CDS' participation in World AIDS Day) and Leah Feldman (who sprinkled her Bible class with quotes from Broadway shows like *Rent*) kept current with the cultural world of their students. Rabbi Fine kept a careful sense of his role as a teacher who remained culturally distinct from his students. He was here to influence them, and not the other way around. Rabbi Oren even spoke bluntly about his suspicion

that working at CDS might be spiritually unhealthy or lead him to compromise on his own exacting religious standards. “Sooner or later,” he mused, “it’s got to affect you.” Oren, it appeared, was caught in the contradiction of all that CDS represented. Even as he worked very hard to be a part of his student’s lives, he maintained a need to defend his own cultural boundaries.

Communities of Practice and Cultural Boundaries

From an ethnographic perspective, the simultaneous dance of cultural openness and defense of identity on the part of students and faculty members became more coherent when explored through the lenses which orient this study. In its efforts to sensitize students to tradition, to defend Jewish continuity and to develop shared mutual understanding, CDS reflected several core dynamics that are central to the communities of practice literature. The phenomena of cultural actors performing in the role of brokers, keepers of continuity and boundary crossers come to the forefront when viewed through this critical lens.

For those who enrolled in CDS out of some external motive such as a desire to attend a less expensive private institution or to avoid Woodville’s racially integrated public schools, the need to grapple with the cultural contradictions precipitated by their contact with the Black Hat faculty might have played a minor role in their experience of CDS. For everyone else, becoming a part of the school demanded openness to new experiences that could be challenging or troubling. “It’s very tricky,” Linda Klein offered, “it’s often risky.” Both faculty and students found themselves in situations where they were forced to make sense of beliefs and practices that were alien, perhaps even threatening, and both groups had occasion to behave in ways that were at times

provocative as well as defensive. They were working their way across the divide of the “contact point” that I described early in this chapter. In the process, some very coherent models of engagement came into focus.

Etienne Wenger described “brokering” as a key feature of any community of practice (Wenger, 1998). The key defining characteristic of cultural brokers is that they cross boundaries and facilitate interaction between different groups within an organization. Wenger identified the act of “ambivalent relations” and “multi-membership” as key relational activities that cultural brokers engage in. In business organizations, brokers often play an interpretive role, transmitting the thinking of management to workers. Wenger argued that it is critical for brokers to manage the flow of different needs and expectations that naturally arise among groups who coexist in different spaces of a larger organization. CDS offered a much more challenging environment, one in which the main activity of any given day might focus on the religious and cultural differences which divided students and faculty. Given the desire of teachers like Berman to “sensitize” students or to invite a deeper understanding of religious life, CDS faculty purposely took upon themselves the role of cultural brokering, along with all of the ambiguity and potential for misunderstanding that this role entailed. In cases where students rejected these efforts to share or sensitize them, they were engaging in a natural act of boundary defense that has been identified in other settings as cultural resistance (Willis, 1977; Ogbu, 2003).

In the case of the faculty’s commitment to prevent intermarriage, the notion of boundaries and resistance took on a different form. The faculty’s ideologically grounded commitment was intended to preserve and protect the larger body or corpus of the Jewish

people. In Wenger's (1998) terms, this commitment focused on the "pivot between the social (order) and the individual" which lay at the very root of identity formation. CDS faculty strongly believed that their collective entity was endangered, and bluntly affirmed the need for their students to make choices regarding relationships and family that would further strengthen the larger Jewish people. In this particular case, the faculty of CDS adopted a conservative stance in its defense of the purity and integrity of the group. Here the perspective of Mary Douglas proves tremendously helpful. The mission to "keep them Jewish" despite the threat of assimilation or intermarriage is an act which focuses all of its energy on the defense of the group. It is identical to notions that Douglas described as the "vulnerable us" and the "predatory them" (Douglas, 1982) in conjuring images of a weak or beleaguered group that must close ranks to defend itself from corrosive external influences. E. L. Harris (1995) profiled a similar dynamic in the life of one such school, a Bible based Christian institution, that he characterized as "collectivist." Interestingly, E. L. Harris noted the absence of grid demarcations in this school, and a maximizing of group concerns. It is telling that when even the most ritually committed faculty members at CDS spoke about their mission to prevent intermarriage, they quickly abandoned categories of grid, noting that they would consider their students to be "good Jews" if they simply married Jewish partners and raised their children to be loyal to the group. In retrospect, the faculty's commitment to maintaining the health of their group or collective, even at the complete expense of such "grid" concerns as ritual practice, made the faculty's willingness to defer or circumvent ritual concerns all the more rational from an ethnographic perspective. Simply stated, the mission of CDS was to preserve the group. The grid could wait.

The final and most prevalent issue which all parties identified as a part of CDS' unique character was the commitment that faculty and students made to mutual understanding. This commitment, more than any of the areas described above, gains a particular sense of coherence from the theoretical underpinnings that Lave and Wenger developed in their work around practice, participation and community. Wenger (1998) offered three foundational notions that help model the way in which CDS' apparently incoherent aggregation of individuals might plausibly call itself a community. Wenger's construct of identity begins with the notion that common practices might develop through shared activities and experiences. As varied cultural experiences or practices layer one upon the other, they give rise to identities that could be fluid and in a state of "constant becoming," depending upon the sum total of these experiences. An individual's unique aggregation of experiences might then develop into trajectories, variants of the larger "reified" group identity that endowed specific individuals with a uniquely developed sense of themselves in distinction to the identity of the larger group. In cases where the group was large, diverse or inclusive of varying cultural boundaries, some individuals could earn a status that afforded them legitimate membership in varying cultural spaces simultaneously. Essential to this act of "multimembership" was the ability of an individual to do the "work of reconciliation necessary to maintain one identity across boundaries" (Wenger, 1998, p. 158). This notion precisely encapsulates the quest for mutual understanding that seemed to take on truly mythical proportions at CDS. Without being missionary or relativistic, the chief ideological leaders of CDS believed that individual members of their community should develop both familiarity and sympathy with the many individual expressions of Jewish identity that other members of the

community brought to the school. This idea of “multimembership,” a broad and unifying identity that spanned the gaps of religious ideology or practice, was a central myth of CDS’s ideology. I will address the extent to which the school succeeded in creating a community in accordance with this ideal shortly.

The final dynamic that enabled interpenetrating multimembership between the Black Hat, secular, Modern Orthodox, Reform, traditional and other sub-communities at CDS was a concept that Lave and Wenger (1991) described as peripheral participation. They argued that one may participate in a community’s cultural practices from the periphery by maintaining an interest in these practices, even if one did not enact them. For example, apprentices to a tradesman or spectators at a football game might be peripheral participants even without directly engaging in the specific activity of craft work or athletic competition. Lave studied a wide range of communities in which the engagement of peripheral actors brought them status, knowledge and legitimacy within their cultural settings. (Lave, 1977, 1982, 1988) Wenger extended upon this work to argue that even the mental construction of a nonexistent community by way of a peripheral participant’s sympathy or imagination could be sufficient to “create a shared reality and construct an identity” (Wenger, 1998, p. 175). This might explain how a community like CDS might create any shared cultural space at all. When students showed deference to the norms of the Black Hat world, not enacting them but observing them from a distance, a sense of normativity was created. When the faculty demonstrably deferred expectations of ritual observance, the notion of non-threatening multimembership was expanded. The sum of these efforts constructed a cultural space that was in many ways *sui generis*. By balancing a deep ideological devotion to religious

ritual with a commitment to both heterodoxy and heteropraxis within the student body, the school ultimately rendered diversity of thought and action as a normative position within the cultural space of CDS.

Drawing Conclusions

My purpose in studying the life of CDS was to explore how individuals from different cultural backgrounds negotiated their participation in a pluralistic community. My goal was not to argue for or against this structure, nor was it to assess the school's claims about the degree to which it succeeded in achieving the school's mission of welcoming diverse individuals into its midst. Instead, I intended to examine how students and members of the Jewish studies faculty at CDS made meaning of their interactions within a unique cultural space. I have deployed the techniques of a respected tradition of ethnographic inquiry in order to develop clear and reliable conclusions from the potentially inchoate impressions of field work. At the same time, important literature from the fields of educational philosophy, anthropology and sociology guided my efforts to frame well theorized conclusions about the cultural life of CDS.

I entered the field with the premise that CDS should be viewed as a "contact point" based upon significant gaps of culture which separated the Jewish studies faculty and students. The reliability of this claim was bolstered by the fact that multiple informants from different backgrounds noted the differences in language, music, dress and wealth which gave coherence to the expressed conclusion of both parents and staff members that they "lived in different worlds" from each other. While the differences between students and faculty included external elements of culture, it was the areas of

ritual practice and religious ideology in which these two parties diverged most significantly.

In order to manage the potential for dislocation or invalidation that these differences created, faculty and students adopted the practice of deferring engagement regarding ritual issues while simultaneously employing loopholes from within the system of Jewish ritual law. While each of these moves had the effect of maintaining the normativity of Black Hat standards of ritual practice, they allowed faculty and students to interact without having to come into conflict over the propriety of any individual choice regarding Jewish practice. Despite this strategy, students and faculty reported a breadth of reactions surrounding their own feelings of inclusion or exclusion from CDS. Students' experiences ranged widely, and many made valuable connections with specific faculty members who left themselves open to mentoring relationships. Faculty and parents discussed multiple reasons for participating in a community that required this considerable work of bridging boundaries. The most significant and commonly held objective among faculty and parents was the aspiration to develop a deeper understanding of Jewish individuals from many differing backgrounds. Even while many individuals joined CDS for "instrumental" reasons not related to any belief or ideology, I conclude that the desire for deeper mutual understanding represents the one most broadly held ideal or belief which motivated participants in the life of CDS.

Models of Culture and Community

While the literature of ethnography and anthropology which underlies this study is very broad, three specific frames of reference provided a theoretical lens in developing interpretive representations of the cultural life of CDS. Wenger (1998) and Lave's (Lave

& Wenger, 1991) notion of participation and communities of practice helped in developing a frame for how shared practice, even at the ideational level, enabled individuals to construct notions of community out of their shared interactions. Douglas's (1970, 1982) concept of group and grid added a tool for locating actions that might strengthen the cohesion of a larger group (either CDS or the Jewish people as a whole) or which brought actors into conformity with grid-based concerns such as the tradition of Jewish ritual practice. Strike's (2003) taxonomy offered a final organizing framework by conceptualizing any given school as an orchestra, a congregation, a church or a family. This final schema provided both the clarity and rigor needed to make some objective discrimination between the various claims to community or lack thereof that this study revealed.

Before offering any final statements about the type of interaction which took place at CDS, it will be valuable to underscore why this issue matters and how it relates to the core question of how individuals from diverse backgrounds negotiate their participation in a pluralistic community. My attempt to bring Strike's categories to bear on the lived experience of CDS faculty and students was closely connected to the more expansive goal of this paper; the attempt to move from "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) to a deeper and more fully theorized understanding of the type of cultural interactions that took place in the school. Strike's taxonomy was valuable not just for the clarity that his labels imposed, but also for the attendant dynamics that each of those categorizations suggested.

In an article that appeared subsequent to his discussion of the structure of school communities, Strike pushed deeper into the very purpose of schooling as a building block

of society. He argued that “to have an adequate vision of the nature of a good education involves...having a shared picture of a good society and a shared vision of what is best in life, a vision of the role of education in human flourishing” (Strike, 2004, p. 223). Strike argued that different kinds of schooling produced different kinds of social “goods,” even as these structures were uniquely predisposed to creating counterbalancing negative dynamics which he termed “the bads” of schooling (Strike, 2003). He suggested that tribes were extremely impressive for the depth of attachment that individuals in tightly knit organizations experienced. At the same time, tribes were the most likely to exclude, to reject or to stigmatize members whose actions diverged from communal norms. While Strike acknowledged the capacity of a family structure to be caring or at least highly inclusive, he argued that the thin quality of this association, the lack of depth and absence of compelling content, made the family all but meaningless as the basis for a larger social order. While orchestras offered open access to all in pursuit of common goals, Strike viewed them as instrumental and, hence, transitory communities.¹⁹⁴ Strike identified the congregation as “an association of people who have joined together to pursue some shared vision of good human living” based upon their common ideals and beliefs. In his view, this mode of educational community was both cohesive and inclusive without falling prey to the stigmatizing tendencies of the tribe (Strike, 2003). Finally, the existence of ideals and purposes that anchored a congregation left this model uniquely suited to preparing younger members of society to take their place in a world that sought a more expansive social good. In light of Strike’s arguments, the implications of these

¹⁹⁴ In his later article, Strike (2004) shifted the terms of definition from “orchestra” to “shopping mall” as part of an argument that this kind of association was instrumental and not essential. “We are anonymous moral atoms in such institutions,” Strike claimed, adding “such institutions do not nurture the young” (p. 227).

four models for CDS are quite profound. Of these models, CDS could not claim to be an “orchestra,” in which members of the group might discover their commonality through shared practices due to the divisive influence of the faculty and students’ differing commitments to ritual observance. For the same reason, the “tribe” was also inapplicable to the school as a whole, as this model calls upon community members to merge their own separate identities through the adoption of shared beliefs and practices.

The “family” seemed to best represent CDS, as it offered a framework in which people need not have any deep common ideational or practical ties. There is a strong sentimental sense that the blood of family is thicker than the water of free association. A more grounded sociological look at family suggests that since families are bonds that emerge out of biological happenstance, family members need not have anything at all in common with one another by virtue of their family connection. The best that can be said of a family like CDS is that it was sufficiently open that it did not discriminate, and those who came to the school for purely instrumental reasons need not share ideological commitments or ritual practices in common with the faculty who taught their classes. At the worst, however, family does not offer a meaningful connection. It is a non-community whose members draw few of the benefits of deep association from one another. Family would therefore be the best nomenclature to describe of group of individuals gathered either for no purpose whatsoever or for some collection of purposes so disparate as to defy any totalizing picture. Such a model could well describe CDS.

Strike’s final category is that of a congregation, a body which allows people with different practices to gather together, unified around their shared commitment to an ideal or belief which supersedes the category of practice. While I suggested a number of

possible beliefs or broadly held ideals that emerged from my field work, most of them were one-sided and therefore could not adequately describe a shared commitment on the part of religious studies faculty and students. The one possible exception was the commitment to mutual understanding. This ideal emerged more often than any other aspect of institutional belief or defining mission at CDS, bar none.

Theoretically, the school's pursuit of shared understanding among divergent groups offered adequate grounding for students and their teachers to join together as a "congregation" of diverse practitioners who held a common belief that their encounters with one another were meaningful and beneficial not just to CDS but to the Jewish people as a whole. Evidence for such an ideational superstructure emerged from accounts of purposeful parent choices to enroll children at CDS, from a clear and elaborate messaging system that was reinforced by the headmaster and from such artifacts as the lyrics to songs and by the staging of large school ceremonies. At the same time, the faculty's limited interest in the cultural lives of their students, the occasional need for specific faculty members to disassociate from shared cultural space and the paucity of student inputs that echoed this message of mutual understanding¹⁹⁵ all raised questions about the plausibility of the congregational model. While the commitment of specific individuals to diversity of belief and practice was impressive, CDS as a whole did not articulate a shared, deeply held vision that could serve as ideological common ground for all parties.

¹⁹⁵ The issue of student inputs was complicated by two factors. First, protocols for interviewing students involved a far greater degree of Institutional Review Board supervision and a greater likelihood of denial by the IRB of the University of Maryland under whose auspices this project was conducted. In addition, parental consent for student interviews would have been more complicated to secure than the consent agreements that parents, teachers and administrators provided. Given the reality of these complications, this study was not able to make use of direct student interviews and instead relied upon direct classroom observations which are fairly usable under UMD IRB provisions. A second factor which complicated access to student viewpoints was the observation by one CDS administrator that students' beliefs about pluralism and coexistence were a moving target, rarely present at the beginning of high school years and usually maturing closer to graduation.

Conclusion: What Model is CDS?

In the final analysis, I argue that CDS was a family that aspired to be a congregation. All the while, it was sometimes threatened by the dynamics of a tribe. The aspect of family is the easiest to understand. It is safe and non-threatening, making few claims upon members of the community except tolerance. Shared behaviors and common beliefs all pale before the core imperative of belonging. When pious rabbis who would never think to set foot in a McDonalds, much less eat there, tell their students “It’s like Las Vegas. What happens there stays there,” or when students park discretely around the corner from their teachers while visiting on Shabbat afternoon, then some manner of disconnect is evident. Teacher and student have agreed to belong, to co-exist and to overlook the profound disagreements that emerge from the fact that one views every mundane act, even the act of snacking, as imbued with intense religious meaning. The same is true in the case of a non-religious student. He is not simply disinterested; rather, he behaves in a way that actively denies the importance of religious or theological claims upon his identity as a Jew. The juxtaposition of these two individuals within one school suggests a compact in which both parties agree to have thin associations, to show deference to an irrelevant set of rituals of one is the student and to avoid enforcing categorical imperatives if one is the teacher. If this were all that could be said about CDS, then it would be adequate to state that the school offered a space where two groups bearing different agendas did an admirable job of coexisting without actually accepting the responsibilities of a real community.

There is, however, more to be said. CDS truly did aim to get beyond the level of pleasant but non-threatening co-existence. The administrative leadership of CDS

envisioned an important picture of “the good” as represented by a society in which the cultural costumes of dress, articles of religious faith and even the many detailed trappings of ritual observance were not sufficient to impose barriers between members of the same people. The congregational aspect of life at CDS surfaced in moments when students sang “If we disagree, we still can live in unity.” It became palpable as Black Hat rabbis waxed rhapsodic over the young woman who became a rabbinic leader within a liberal Jewish denomination. And it was forcefully present when Mrs. Stein, her head modestly covered by a wig in deference to the norms of her Black Hat upbringing, proclaimed that the many access roads to Jewish life were “each of them legitimate.” These statements reflected a well conceptualized vision of human flourishing that was best achieved when members of the Jewish community were encouraged to explore a diversity of access roads as part of their own personal and spiritual journeys. Such a vision offered the potential to unify members of CDS in congregational fashion.

Nonetheless, I argue that the congregational vision remained an aspiration, merely a vision that was not yet lived out in the daily experience of life at CDS. There were three reasons. First, the ideological notion of a broadly inclusive Jewish society that unites disparate parties in their commitment to each individual’s quest for growth was under theorized. By this, I mean that the school had not invested sufficient effort to develop a shared language around the concept of inclusiveness as an anchoring point for all CDS students. The school had the potential to reach this vision in a fully explicit and shared fashion. Her guiding rabbi and headmaster both shared a thoughtful vision that was grounded in their own beliefs. Many of the symbols and rituals of the school reflected, inculcated or reinforced this value. Still, two important preconditions for

sharing this vision were lacking. First, it lacked specific language, a name and an explicit vocabulary that could allow all students, teachers and parents to make their commitment to the value of pluralism explicit. Second, the value of pluralism was undercut with some frequency by the faculty's resurgent tribalism.

While I argued, above, that the model of a tribe was not applicable to CDS as a whole, the same can not be said for its Jewish studies instructors. They were, without a doubt, a tribe by virtue of their common beliefs and shared ritual practices. Faculty were closely bonded, highly defensive of boundaries and highly transparent to one another, each a *sine qua non* of tribal culture. The notion that the CDS faculty's tribalism might be corrosive to the school's credo of religious diversity was far more than propositional. In the course of field work, I spoke with faculty members who experienced exclusion after they crossed ideological boundary lines. Field notes also capture the experience of at least one group of students who contended forcefully that they were excluded from participation in one of the "in group" rituals due to their unacceptable beliefs or associations. Even the carefully negotiated deferral of contested religious practices sometimes backfired, as in the case of the school's annual basketball tournament. Ultimately, the most significant feature which made CDS a fascinating ethnographic environment to study was precisely this tribal aspect of the Black Hat community.

The entire issue of tribalism became pointedly clear to me following one school assembly in the spring. As part of the school's commemoration of *Yom haShoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day), the high school viewed the movie *Paper Clips*. The film portrayed the efforts of a small town school in Kentucky which served no Jews whatsoever but nonetheless developed an impressive curriculum related to the Holocaust.

The school ultimately built an extensive, on-site memorial and museum to this terrible tragedy. After the screening was concluded, Rabbi Pearl spoke with me and offered his honest response to the larger story. “I have much more in common with (the beliefs of) these rural, American Protestants than I do with most of the Jews who live in Woodville,” he said. “But I wouldn’t take a bullet for them.” Despite all of the “congregational” values and religious beliefs that Rabbi Pearl might share with a community of Protestant educators, his prime frame of reference remained the categories of insider/outsider, us/them. He espoused the code of the tribe over and above the values of the congregation. In similar fashion, it was clear that the ideological appeal of CDS’ pluralism would frequently be in tension with the limits of its tribalism.

Given the deep clashes between the school’s piety and its diversity, the faculty’s group loyalty and the imperative to welcome students indiscriminately, it was not surprising that a sustained feeling of tension was an inherent feature of life at CDS. Students and faculty were all well aware of their differences. At times, both parties deferred to the other in the name of politeness. At other times, students and faculty plunged directly in to the awkwardness and tension that were inevitably precipitated by this meeting of cultural opposites. As a true cultural “contact point,” life at CDS offered the possibility of frustration, anger and even outright invalidation. Despite all the tension, students and faculty showed remarkable abilities to step across boundaries. And so, my final characterization of CDS includes not just the sense of tension that was palpable at many times, but also a sense of tremendous potential. CDS offered the possibility, even if not fully realized, of a fascinating dialogue among cultural opposites. Perhaps it was enough that CDS had come as close as they did to the ideal of a

community that was purposeful and intentional in its diversity. Though yet unrealized, the potential of becoming that inclusive congregation still lay within reach. In the words of Sharon Berman:

The greatest thing that you could possibly hope to evolve is that you have a pluralistic group of (students) who have grown into understanding each other. They are accepting of their differences, and find ways to negotiate those differences.

This vision might not have been realized in all its fullness but, as Rabbi Fine once reminded me, “I need to leave something for (others) to do. I mean...what’s the next generation going to work on?”

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Michael Zeldin, in his editorial preface to a recent volume of *The Journal of Jewish Education*, challenged Jewish educational research to be “both timely and timeless” (Zeldin, 2009). As this project came to conclusion in the winter of 2010, Zeldin’s words resonated powerfully. While I will address several “timeless” issues within the field of cultural studies, this research also speaks to a number of “timely” concerns which were wholly unforeseen during the 2005-2006 academic year in which my field work took place.

First I will attend to that which is timeless. That conversation begins with a discussion of the field of cultural studies including specific issues of methodology that emerged as challenges during field work at CDS. Next, I will address issues that have a more timely character beginning with the rising consciousness of culture and its impact on general educational practice over the last several decades. Within the field of Jewish educational research and practice, this research speaks directly to emerging trends related to the shifting identity of the Jewish community in the twenty-first century and suggests important directions for both research and educational practice.

Implications for Methodology and the Study of Culture

Geertz, in his famed essay titled “Thick Description,” argued that the researcher had the power to “bring us in to touch with the lives of strangers” (Geertz, 1973).

Essential to Geertz’s concept of field studies in anthropology was the notion that the researcher himself or herself played a critical role in collecting, mediating and interpreting the cultural patterns to which he or she was privy. The next logical question

should be: How can the reader determine the veracity of the researcher's conclusions? If reader and researcher were both present in the field, would they have drawn similar conclusions? Does the story told in this work "belong" to the researcher, his informants or none of the above? This simple set of questions opens the larger quandary of research method, integrity and validity with which every project of the humanistic disciplines must contend. The answers to such questions depend heavily upon the method and attendant epistemological assumptions which frame the researcher's work. Having argued for the benefits of ethnographic field research as a method to explore the culture of CDS, this study of necessity contended with several of the challenges inherent to that discipline. First, this work is cognizant of the limits of participant generated observational data. The value and complications of relying upon testimonial reports also emerged as an issue following field work. The course of field work at CDS revealed important and unavoidable quandaries regarding the ethics of field work itself. This study offers methodological guidance regarding the interplay of emic and etic knowledge. Finally, this study suggests additional ways to understand the adaptation of cultural models as part of a shifting global ethnoscape that includes new and unprecedented models for imagining culture and community.

The Self as Instrument

One important discovery which emerged during the course of field work had nothing to do with ritual, religious life or pluralism. Rather, it was an awareness of the fact that it would be impossible to tell the tale of CDS without becoming an insider. Only as an insider to the life of CDS did I gain the ability to understand how life in the school worked. This awareness went well beyond the question of access, boundaries or trust. It

had more to do with the fact that the rhythms and cadences of life in any institution, CDS included, are fully available only to one who has made himself an active member of the community. By teaching on a daily basis, working alongside faculty, joining debates in the staff lounge and opening up my own inner beliefs and struggles, I did not just acquire “access.” Rather, I became part of the total experience of life within the institutional framework of CDS. As such an “honorary insider,” I became sensitive to patterns of behavior, tropes of dress and even the pitch of one teacher’s voice, which varied depending upon whom she was addressing. In the language of Elliot Eisner, I developed an “enlightened eye” to the actions which surrounded me each day at CDS (Eisner, 1991).

Eisner argued that “the self is the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it. It is the ability to see and interpret significant aspects. It is this characteristic that provides unique, personal insight into the experience under study” (Eisner, 1991, p. 33). While much of spoken language is clear, an equally important component of communication is unspoken. Of necessity, I assumed responsibility as a field researcher for making determinations regarding a host of non-verbal cues. Did Rabbi Fine purposefully exit graduation to avoid listening to young women, or was he in need of the bathroom? Did Rabbi Siler’s refusal to stand in Rabbi Warren’s presence represent a snub or a case of back pain? While these two cases of faculty behavior represent the most significant moments in which the content of observed action depended heavily upon my interpretive judgment as a researcher, one might argue that even the verbatim dialogue of classroom observation or participant interviews demanded significant interpretation. In short, it is impossible to argue that the life of CDS played out in

empirical ways that might be measured. Instead, I join Wolcott in arguing that participation in the life of a community affords the researcher experiences, which he or she must then bring into focus in a process that is equally reflective and interpretative¹⁹⁶ (Wolcott, 1999).

A researcher is bound to exercise reasonable circumspection so that, as Shank cautions, “what you say you have observed is, in fact, what really happened” (Shank, 2002). The question is complicated by differing epistemological stances as well as the range of disagreement about the possibility or even desirability of attempting to remove the subjectivity of the interpretive self from the research process (Lather, 1986). This work abided by the most basic cautions of the field by engaging in “analytic bracketing” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003; Maxwell, 1996) in an attempt to render field observations in a disciplined and defensible fashion. At the same time, deeper voices should not be silenced in the research process. Without disputing more traditional demands of research validity, Coffee (1999) argued for “passionate analysis” that does not negate the experience of the researcher, and Behar famously cautioned students of culture that “anthropology that does not break your heart is not worth doing” (Behar, 1997, p. 177). In short, I argue that a personally engaged stance is not just a necessary evil in research around culture. It is a tool of encounter as basic as the paper and pens of my field notebook.¹⁹⁷ Without the deep personal connections that I forged during field work, there might literally be no story to tell at all.

¹⁹⁶ For a discussion which takes this premise further, see Gadamer’s argument in *Truth and Method* (Gadamer, 1960/2004).

¹⁹⁷ Also see Foley (2002) on the “reflexive turn” in ethnography. Within the field of Jewish studies, note Hyman’s (2004) reflection on the challenges and possible inevitability of “going native” while conducting ethnographic research within the Jewish community.

Testing Testimony

The other necessity of field research is testimony. Upon reviewing the underlying sources which provided the basis of evidence for the claims that this research advances, roughly 45% emerged from participant interviews. Participant interviews were split almost evenly between fifteen parents and eighteen staff or administrators. Given the complications of receiving full parent permission and informed consent as well as concerns that students might distort the interviewing process by constructing their testimony in order to meet expectations of the questioner, they were not included as interview subjects. There was a wide range of variation in the quality of inputs that came from participant interviews. In general, faculty tended to generate more precise and better grounded inputs regarding CDS since they spent more time engaged in the cultural interchanges which defined the institution. Parents were understandably at a greater remove. At the same time, the comments of CDS students were often very insightful, and reflected important information about their experiences.¹⁹⁸

With an eye towards future research, I argue strongly for a model which makes far greater use of student inputs, especially for a study like this one which sought to theorize around the shared experiences of faculty and students. While there are clear limits to the quality of students' judgment, the same holds true in the case of any informant who might potentially ignore, exaggerate or confabulate information for the researcher (Roman, 2003). Indeed, the well known controversy over Margaret Mead's reliance upon the testimony of young girls during her field work suggests that possible

¹⁹⁸ Such comments, when recorded in the course of observing normal classroom teaching, are fully acceptable sources of field data in accordance with University of Maryland Institutional Review Board guidelines, exemption category #1. See Online documentation of UMD-IRB policies at: <http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB/exemption%20categories.html>. Accessed 3/3/2010.

inaccuracies in her research revolved as much around the judgment of the researcher as it did the veracity of her informants (Freeman, 1983, 2000; Holmes, 1987). In the case of research within secondary schools, field data from this study suggests that it would be advisable to seek out the voices of high school age teenagers in an effort to understand how they interacted in their own cultural space. Numerous other ethnographers who study schools, youth culture and education have made such methodological choices (Fine & Weis, 1998, 2003; Milner, 2004). Other recent work in the field of Jewish education has also drawn broadly from the inputs of adolescents in ways that have added important texture to the quality of field work (Charme, 2009; Kay, 2009). Their methods should be emulated wherever possible.

The Ethics of Field Work

The final issue which became evident after the close of field work lay in the area of confidentiality and the ethics of disclosure. The first issue was simple enough to frame. In the field of Jewish educational research, it is tremendously difficult to make durable guarantees of confidentiality as part of field work. While there are a large number of Jewish day schools across the United States, I selected CDS specifically because of traits that make the school distinctive, and hence easy to identify based upon its attributes alone. To make matters worse, a few important primary and secondary sources referenced the school by name or are so well known that even citing them invites disclosure. While all of the names of participants including teachers, students and families have been altered, in the age of Google it would be easy enough to link key attributes of the school to the actual institution. There are two possible answers to this quagmire. Malone (2003) essentially suggests that most informed consent arrangements

are perfunctory. She goes on to argue that participants in qualitative research should honestly be advised before signing consent forms that their participation might have consequences that could include harm to their careers. Other scholars of Jewish education have taken a far different approach to published work in this field. Both Pekarsky (2006) as well as Pomson and Schnoor's (2008) recent work cited the actual names and locations of the schools that they studied. Given the fact that both of their schools were unique within the national scene, it made sense to do so. It remains to be seen if this will invite other schools to take on similar commitments to disclosure. For this study, guarantees of confidentiality were absolutely necessary in order to secure access to CDS in the first place, and others are cautioned to proceed in ways that maintain the letter and spirit of any guarantees that researchers extend to stakeholders within their research sites.

The most daunting of all issues that arose during the course of field work involved questions of research ethics and interpersonal boundaries. It would be an understatement to claim that I was a "participant" in the life of CDS. It would be more accurate to say that I was welcomed, even adopted, into a community. Members of CDS have kept touch with me for years since my departure from the field, sometimes to ask for guidance with curricular issues, other times just to stay current. I have been invited to family events and have accepted Shabbat hospitality within the Black Hat community surrounding CDS. Most importantly, I have disclosed my own personal issues surrounding faith, belief, disagreement with ritual practice and interest in spiritual growth as part of my interaction

with members of the CDS faculty.¹⁹⁹ That disclosure had two important consequences. First, it drew faculty members towards me in ways that engendered sympathy, moral support and even a genuine desire to assist me as I proceed on my own religious journey. At the same time, the degree of openness that I shared with both students and faculty members enabled me to gain a deeper and more human understanding of the individuals within CDS. They are fully present for me as real people, sometimes endearing, sometimes flawed, but always authentic.

The ability to forge deep bonds with some of my subjects has important implications for the quality of research, in that it gave me deeper access to the experiences of community members while admittedly risking some bias of interpretation.²⁰⁰ The real implications lie much deeper. At times, I encountered members of CDS as subjects or “third persons,” an “it” in the language of Martin Buber (1937/2004, 2002). Far more often, my connections were with a “thou,” a partner or a colleague. Upon exiting the field, I returned my stance to that of observer as I categorized, coded data and abstracted from the level of experience towards taxonomy. I will confess that a certain weariness set in during this process, perhaps a concern that I would betray confidences, that accurate judgments would render caring people in an unflattering light or that I would offer conclusions that might fly in the face of CDS’ expertly constructed public relations materials.

¹⁹⁹ At one point in my interview with Mrs. Stein, she stopped in mid-answer and turned to me stating that “I don’t need to tell you (this), since you told me that you yourself had a journey, a religious journey...” At that moment, it was clear that the leader of CDS was learning about the researcher as much as the researcher was learning about them.

²⁰⁰ As a response to this challenge, see my comments about bracketing as a component of sound research practice, above, p. 246. See Peshkin (1986) and Levine (2003) for examples of cultural studies in which the researcher did not share such deep ties with his or her host community, making it far simpler to exit the field and write without a sense of personal entanglement.

While the risks that I assumed as a researcher and participant observer were rather limited, that is hardly the issue. Of greater concern is the fact that the process of field work subjects the researcher to the demands of being in a relationship which has the potential to be as much collegial as exploitative. Deyhle, Hess and Lecompte (1992) wrote that “the anthropologist starts fieldwork as a stranger and seeks to balance friendships earned during the course of the research.” Nonetheless, one cannot do this work without spanning relational boundaries in a way that is psychologically taxing. The most effective response to this state of affairs was my own commitment to absolute, unflinching honesty. As much as I shared my personal journey with members of CDS, I also made it clear that I was present as an observer who carried a binder of field notes. It is my hope that neither the quality of my research nor the quality of interpersonal respect was compromised along the way.

Emic and Etic Knowledge

Beyond technical concerns of method, this research both contributes to and benefits from the overall maturation of the field of ethnography. Geertz, in a little noted essay entitled “The State of the Art,” once commented that “one of the advantages of anthropology as a scholarly enterprise is that no one, including its practitioners, quite knows exactly what it is” (Geertz, 2000, p. 89). Within the sub-field of ethnography, his claim is becoming less and less true, at least to the extent that the field holds clear standards of practice and measures of quality. Some ninety years have passed since Malinowski pushed off into the wilds of New Guinea to study culture first hand by living among the people whom he wished to understand better. The work that Malinowski devoted to encountering “native” culture was followed by efforts to systematize his

understandings while developing a clearer theoretical understanding of the dynamics that governed their society. With Malinowski, the process of cultural representation had moved decisively from the “armchair” to “the field.”²⁰¹ Since then, even the notion of what the field is and where it lies has changed. Fine and Weis (1998, 2003) made urban America the epicenter of their “critical” ethnographic studies and some of the most daring recent ethnographic work resulted from Sudhir Venkatesh’s (2008) risky forays into the turf of an inner-city Chicago crack gang. The cutting edge in the field of cultural studies is now defined by those who take risks, cross boundaries and live within the communities that they study.²⁰²

This shift in the definition of how researchers do the interpretive work of ethnography involves a rebalancing of the notion of emic and etic representation. Etic description which was grounded in comparative studies that made generalizations about culture from arms-length yielded in the 1980s to a paradigm that privileged emic, insider knowledge. But as Wolcott (1999) cautioned, the claim that “you can’t really know us unless you are one of us” (p. 137) is a falsehood. Rather, multiple points of reference offer different views. The stance that this work embraces eschews the emic-etic divide by insisting that one needs to act like a cultural insider in order to see clearly, but then think like an outsider in order to theorize dispassionately. The result is an approach to

²⁰¹ This represented an important step for the field which had previously bifurcated itself along the lines of field workers who sent non-contextualized “slabs” of information home to “armchair ethnographers” who then rendered pronouncements upon what these experiences meant (Van Maanen, 1988, 1999). William James is reputed to have once asked Sir James Frazer about some of the “natives” whom he had known and written about. Frazer famously replied “But heaven forbid” (In Deyhle et al, 1992).

²⁰² In one section of his work on the Black Kings, a South Side gang which sold crack, the gang’s leader pointedly asked Venkatesh “Why do researchers use multiple choice surveys...? Why don’t they just talk to people?” (Venkatesh, 2008, p. 19).

field work that combines maturity and nuance, a stance that I suggest as a best practice for the larger field of ethnography.

Imaging the New Ethnoscape

E. L. Harris (1995), in describing ways that we might conceptualize school culture, suggested that “organizations do not *have* cultures,” rather, “they *are* cultures” (p. 618). Harris’ observation brings home the point that culture is neither innate nor fixed, rather it is a pattern of symbols and representations that can be enacted anywhere. A critical lesson that emerged from this study of CDS was the extent to which patterns of culture created a shared reality, a sense of continuity and even a sense of “place” for individuals within the school. In order to create this shared cultural space, members of CDS afforded themselves the freedom to play with new models, to experiment and freely improvise new patterns of culture. The compelling quality of the story that took place at CDS was precisely the fact that individuals whose values and behavioral choices would have otherwise disqualified them from participating as actors in a common cultural script chose to collaborate in building a shared communal framework. Out of a still inchoate sense of loyalty, even the most conservative members of CDS innovated new patterns of cultural engagement and enacted unprecedented and newly imagined paradigms of community.²⁰³

This exercise in cultural innovation has important precedent in the literature of diaspora cultures. Appadurai’s work on the impact of globalization upon Asian cultures

²⁰³ The deferral of sacred ritual categories in order to promote a sense of shared community stands out as a choice that flies in the face of the values of the black hat community. At the same time, the notion of honoring the ritual practices of this community is itself countercultural within the non-Orthodox segments of the Woodville community. The sum of both positions again points to a concerted effort to create some new framework for members of both communities to engage with one another.

(Appadurai, 2003) as well as his discussion of the opportunity for local culture to recast itself even when removed from its home environs (Appadurai, 1996) offer important examples of how other cultural groups negotiate or even rewrite cultural narratives. In the diaspora communities of displaced Indian and southeast Asian communities which Appadurai studied, the move away from prior, traditional centers of ethnic and communal life opened up the opportunity for individuals to move beyond "highly localized, boundary oriented, holistic, primordialist images of cultural forms and substance" (Appadurai, 2003, p. 44). Instead, Appadurai found that people in new places were forced to create a new sense of localism by way of their own adapted, innovated or invented traditions.

On a larger, global scale, Appadurai argued that the spatial and material sources of culture were bound to become decreasingly significant in a mobile, globally oriented world (Appadurai, 1996). Instead, he argued that contemporary cultural life was increasingly ideational as physically dispersed people come to inhabit "imagined social communities" (p. 32) that span a global "technoscape."

Several key features of life at CDS paralleled significant cultural phenomena which Appadurai described, including the thoughtful use of ritual to create a novel "local" culture (Appadurai, 1996). At the same time as the school generated its own local patterns of association, it preserved the core religious identities of its faculty and students, drawing them together in "ecumenes" of pluralistic space that was built upon "durable cross-societal bonds" between culturally diverse students and teachers (Appadurai, 2003, p. 27). Finally, the concept that community could be imagined or

ideologically invoked reflects exactly that type of novel identity boundaries that define Appadurai's notion of community.

This study of CDS contributes to the discussion that Appadurai initiated by offering additional models of how one traditionally grounded community attempted to redraw or renegotiate its cultural boundaries. Further research into the question of how the concept of diaspora impacts modern Jewish life will offer important lessons for other globalizing world cultures, especially those which seek to assimilate the cultural characteristics of modern Western life without relinquishing the roots of their traditional identities. In the larger context of modern cultural studies, Appadurai's (1996) call to rethink ethnography not as a history of places and neighborhoods but rather as "a history of techniques for the production of locality" (p. 182) is well aligned with this study's attempt to rethink how important cultural spaces gain their unique defining characteristics. Researchers in the fields of both cultural studies and Jewish educational research would be well served by advancing this line of argument further.

Implications for Practice in General Education

While this study centered on the experience of one Jewish day school, the larger question of cultural pluralism within schools represents a critical issue for contemporary educators. Delpit (1995) effectively called attention to problems that resulted when students encountered mono-cultural teaching regimes which did not accommodate student diversity.²⁰⁴ A breadth of other research has demonstrated that cultural forces play an important role in supporting student learning, (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999; Burroughs, Schwartz & Hendricks-Lee, 2000; Dunn, Gemake & Jalali, 1990) with

²⁰⁴ See Au (2002) and Wiltse (2001) regarding the divide between teacher and student culture.

students consistently performing better when the school environment affirmed and adapted to the cultural orientation of individuals. Riehl argued that as schools continue to become even more diverse, it will be essential for them to support even more varied “way(s) of knowing” (Riehl 2000). Riehl concluded that educational leaders will increasingly be required to support diversity within schools in order to enable students to reach high levels of educational attainment.

The life of CDS offers some important lessons for schools attempting to harmonize disparate or centrifugal cultural forces. The first lesson is that simple notions of inclusion in accord with Strike’s model of “family” (Strike, 2003) have the ability to generate a sense of basic cohesion even among relatively disparate groups. This research also suggests that the deeper alignments of “tribal” society need not overwhelm the cultural landscape of schools, as long as those schools are able to develop shared practices or core value commitments. These beliefs or practices exert just the right amount of centripetal “pull” on an otherwise atomistic community, yet not so much as to clash with deeper, less plastic categories of identity. Finally, this research suggests that, under all circumstances, categories of tribal behavior are a threat to the possibility of unity within diverse student communities. Schools should take a strong stance to develop norms which do not allow such tribal categories as race, economic privilege, religious commitment or gender orientation to become determinative of students’ habits of identification or association. To allow this would, in the words of CDS faculty member Rabbi Simon Levi, create “otherizing” experiences that were corrosive to the larger goal of inclusiveness within a diverse school community.

Implications for Research in Jewish Education

Issues of multiculturalism and cultural pluralism have become increasingly relevant within the world both Jewish institutional life and Jewish educational research. There are three principal reasons, all of them related. First is the simple fact that methods of scholarship which define the landscape of cultural studies have increasingly made their presence felt at the epicenter of the Jewish intellectual world. When emerging scholars of Jewish institutional life like Hyman (2009) cite the developmental work of Bruner or like Lehmann (2008) base their research on Cazden and Gee's methods of discourse analysis, it is a clear sign that Jewish educational researchers have discovered an unbounded horizon of scholarly dialogue, and are eager to position their work at the cutting edge of a contemporary dialogue about identity and culture. As programs that train Jewish educators continue to expand beyond the seminary into the realm of more mainstream universities, this trend will only accelerate. We are bound to see minor schools of Jewish educational research influenced by the larger ethos of institutions like Teachers College, New York University, Stanford and the University of Pennsylvania in the near future.

It is also clear that Jewish culture has undergone a dramatic change from within. At the same time as the cultural vista of the most pious Jews appears to be narrowing (Soloveitchik, 1994), liberal Jews are exploring, adapting and innovating new, often idiosyncratic variations of their own Jewish identities that would have been unthinkable two or three decades ago (Cohen & Eisen, 2000). The diversity of these new Jewish identities as well as the occasional clash between them has made the field of Jewish culture even more fertile ground for scholarly work (Freedman, 2000).

The trend has already begun. New scholarship in the field of Jewish educational studies includes Lehmann's (2008) effective use of discourse analysis to describe the flow of interaction between students and teachers in an Orthodox yeshivah. This work is one of the first serious applications of discourse analysis to Jewish education, and will certainly invite further use of this analytic framework in the future. At the same time, Charme, Horowitz, Hyman, and Kress (2008) recently published a significant piece of new research that explores varying models for identity development within a broad range of Jewish educational structures.

Finally, there is a dramatic structural and ideological change taking place within the field of Jewish day schools. Ultra Orthodox (either Black Hat or Hasidic) institutions have increased their enrollments dramatically. At the same time, denominationally affiliated schools have softened their hold on the Jewish landscape, with Reform and especially Conservative schools yielding to multi-denominational community day school in cities around the United States (Schick, 2009). As current economic trends continue to motivate Jewish communal leaders to collaborate or pool resources, the pluralistic community day school is destined to gain an ascendant position, especially among non-Orthodox households.²⁰⁵

The sheer number of such community day schools with their eclectic mix of Jewish identities offers fertile ground for scholars to explore the intersection of tradition and multiculturalism under one roof. As culturally complex field sites abound, so will

²⁰⁵ For further evidence of this trend, see Schick (2009). A striking example of this shift in mindset is demonstrated by a paper given by David Ellenson (2008) which described a pedagogy for liberal day schools. While Ellenson has an institutional loyalty to the small network of Reform Jewish day schools, he treated the entire range of Reform, Conservative and community day schools as a single undifferentiated entity.

future research. The field is already growing. A major study by Wasserfall and Shevitz (2006) tested the ideational content of pluralism within the life of several community day schools in order to determine just what these schools intend, and how they enact, such a philosophical commitment. This study of life at CDS also joins the field of recent doctoral dissertations. One studied community day schools in order to suggest theories of dissonance within the development of contemporary Jewish identities (Hyman, 2008). Another recently defended work compared two Jewish community high schools in order to develop models of pluralism for this growing field (Kay 2009). Much work around these questions remains.

Towards a Theory of Pluralism

From the outset, the purpose of this study was to develop a clearer understanding of how students and religious studies faculty from culturally divergent backgrounds negotiated their participation in the life on one community day high school. As described above, several clear patterns of engagement came into focus during my year of field work at CDS. Faculty and students often deferred engagement regarding contested ideas or practices entirely. At other times, students and faculty engaged in a variety of boundary crossing activities. These included the cultivation of mentoring relationships which faculty invited or students sought out. The faculty's willingness to act as cultural brokers and a regime which rewarded multimembership allowed students to explore Black Hat culture in an eclectic and non-committal fashion, while faculty (sometimes to their disdain or even alarm) were drawn into the cultural world of their students. While the most highly rewarded dynamic within CDS promoted deeper mutual understanding across the cultural divide, the experience of invalidation sometimes arrested the larger

cultural exchange between faculty and students. Even though the life of CDS sometimes felt incoherent, the most important leaders of the school celebrated the notion of inclusivity and reinforced the value of participating in such a complex and varied community. A regular stream of “civic” rituals (Woocher, 1986), symbols and a sustained public dialogue around inclusivity and access to Jewish life reinforced the value of togetherness, despite the school’s inability to define an internal purpose of such co-association beyond the defense of Jewish continuity. While I am hesitant to sum up a year of field work in one paragraph, this is how participation in the shared cultural arena of CDS worked. But what did it mean? While not the core purpose of this study, it is impossible to exit the field without drawing inferences from my research regarding the meaning of pluralism within Jewish communal life.²⁰⁶ Fortuitously, this topic commands the attention of numerous other scholars, and continues to grow in importance for reasons that I mentioned, above.

Current Scholarship

Several scholars of Jewish education paved the way for this discussion with work that they have published over the last decade. While the following listing is not exhaustive, it offers an important set of guideposts to the state of current thinking about what intellectual and cultural diversity means within Jewish life. Israel and Zion (2003), in their introduction to a curriculum for teaching about pluralism within Jewish day schools, argued that “a culture of dissent” was a vital and enduring feature of Jewish

²⁰⁶ Nearly every faculty member at CDS who mentioned pluralism explicitly identified it as a negative value. In the words of Mrs. Stein, “I hate pluralism. I totally hate the word pluralism. It’s a code for something.” Accordingly, any theorization around pluralism cannot be attributed to the value-set of CDS, but is entirely my own extrapolation from patterns of culture observed at the school and their linkage to the larger debate around what pluralism means.

intellectual life since the early Rabbinic period.²⁰⁷ Pekarsky (2006) later wrote about the educational vision that guided Beit Rabban, a boundary-pushing, pluralistic Jewish day school in New York City. For Pekarsky, Rabbinic culture translated into the polyvocalism of Beit Rabban by encouraging all parties from adults to children to engage in an argument about deeply held but differing religious ideals. For Pekarsky, the act of argumentation was in and of itself a unifying commitment, one which offered a firm ideational underpinning for that school's community. Shevitz and Wasserfall's (2006) phenomenologically oriented study of pluralistic Jewish day schools offered one of the first attempts to theorize about the underpinnings of an actual school community. For them, the basis of pluralism was "interpretive," in that the community's participants brought a commitment to differing ideals, but relegated action to a secondary category that was addressed largely by way of accommodation strategies. Hyman (2008) offered a deeper understanding of pluralism as a derivative category that draws from deeper, foundational notions of identity. Given that Hyman saw the creation of complex and culturally dissonant identities as the norm for Jews who live in the modern world, one could argue that pluralism was fundamental to her worldview. It is more a necessity of human development than an exception.

The most recent work in this area explored the working dynamics of two pluralistic day high schools (Kay, 2009). Kay sought a high degree of ideational and analytic precision by describing possible theoretical models for how pluralism works. Drawing upon a broader literature of social and cultural pluralism, Kay offered a basic model which presumed that different groups in pluralistic settings must develop strategies

²⁰⁷ The Rabbinic period begins in the first century of the Common Era.

for how to interact with one another. In Kay's (2009) analysis, the degree to which groups encounter one another follows a spectrum of increasing levels of engagement ranging from "insular pluralism" to a kind of "structural pluralism" which presumes that each group will open itself to the possibility of being influence by cultural "others." Based upon his extensive field work, Kay adds a description of explicit structural and programmatic features of the Jewish community day school which were essential to creating an opportunity for deep cultural interaction (Kay, 2009).²⁰⁸

Future Directions

While the research of Hyman (2008) and Kay (2009) as well as this current study start to shed light on the field of culture within community day schools, tremendous swaths of the field remain obscured. For example, how do Jewish community day schools compare to denominationally affiliated institutions in their impact on students' long term identity development or their participation in Jewish life? Given the particular denominational characteristics of most synagogues, how do contemporary religious leaders manage the potential for tension between their congregants' school and schul affiliations? At what point will a generation of children raised in non-denominational educational settings begin to make its mark as leaders within the Jewish community, and will their leadership be demonstrably different from peers educated in more particularistic settings? Moving from sociology into pedagogy, it would be valuable to explore Ellenson's (2008) claim that there is (or ought to be) a distinct mode of instruction that characterizes the community day school. Is it more Socratic than others? Does student-teacher discourse vary appreciably from other kinds of schools? On a more

²⁰⁸ Kay (2009) described these three key features as "atmospheric pluralism, informational pluralism, and interactional pluralism" (pp. 50-52).

fundamental level, what is the core curriculum of such community schools? Do they conceptualize an essential body of knowledge that the next generation will inherit, or merely transmit a loosely coordinated blend of Modern Hebrew and general religious customs? As the study of community day schools has only now begun to recognize their distinctive character, the scope of issues that still needs to be explored is immense.

Cognizant of the breadth of research that remains unwritten, I suggest two important studies which might help expand the work that my colleagues have done into a more formalized sub-field of “Jewish pluralism studies.” First, I note that much of the current work around pluralism has the character of a mechanical blueprint. Where does one park the car on Shabbat? What food may be eaten and by whom? The further study of pluralistic Jewish schools will profit from a move beyond materialism to the plane of axiology, on the conviction that the way in which a community transmits or modifies its core values and beliefs matters far more than whether or not a rabbi supervises the kitchen. The patterns of cultural engagement which I observed at CDS deserve to be re-read from a stance that explores deeper philosophical questions regarding how communities work with value conflicts. If we believe that all positions of belief are equally valued, then we will of necessity create a different relational space than one in which certain parties deign to converse with others by “respecting their right to be wrong.” What stance regarding the epistemology of religious truth undergirds such a community? The field of “pluralism studies” will have fully matured only when multiple voices weigh in on such questions.

Second, I urge future researchers to continue beyond the question of how a pluralistic community works towards the issue of why such a community is valuable in

the first place. By way of example, Nussbaum (2008) described the roots of American religious pluralism by arguing that “the vulnerability of all Americans in the perilous new worlds they had chosen led to a recognition...that people with different views of life’s ultimate meaning and purpose really needed to learn to live together on decent terms if they were to survive at all” (p. 36). By comparison, Shevitz’s argument that pluralism “is necessary for Jews and Judaism to thrive in a postdenominational world” adopts the same method of pragmatic accommodation as Nussbaum (Shevitz, 2006). Still unanswered is this question: What makes pluralistic spaces good in and of themselves, not just expedient? For this field to mature further, more scholarly voices must address and debate essential philosophical merits and drawbacks of pluralistic schools.

Notes for Practice

Moving beyond philosophy, the lessons learned from this study have much to offer communal leaders, particularly those who work in organizational structures which are multi-denominational, pluralistic or simply dedicated to becoming more welcoming. The experience of how a diverse set of actors negotiated their participation in the life of CDS suggests two important ways of creating or strengthening the bonds of community among individuals who otherwise diverge with regard to key defining aspects of their lives. One model aligns with Strike’s (2003) concept of the orchestra, the other with that of the congregation.

The lesson of the orchestra is that practice matters. Patterns of association depend heavily upon shared rituals, behaviors, projects and even habits. Thoughtful institutions make use of these shared practices to create unifying identities which ultimately span gaps of belief, political conviction or other seemingly immutable characteristics.

Rosenak, in making a case for the judicious use of ritual in Jewish educational settings, took this premise even further by suggesting that any given ritual could be read or interpreted in different ways by its practitioner (Rosenak, 2003). It is as if the ritual were a blank canvass, upon which multiple and divergent meanings could be inscribed. The strategic use of compelling rituals that are loosely framed and feely valued can thus create a neutral space in which any plausible regime of meaning is welcomed. Practical examples of this include school slogans, uniforms, ceremonies and, in the case of the Jewish day schools, a healthy dose of traditional ritual. While internal representations of what these rituals mean might vary,²⁰⁹ the external manifestation of participation in a shared communal activity remains.

In the obverse case of “congregational” community, pluralistic institutions must invest so deeply in their core beliefs that elements of practice fade in importance. If belief anchors the community effectively, then practice might not even be noticed—or it might be strategically ignored. In many ways, CDS offered a strong model for this kind of community. Vision resonated from the headmaster on down. The vision was well supported by multiple messaging systems including the spoken word, songs and printed material. Junior members of the school, from faculty on down to students, had opportunities to verbalize and therefore reinforce the school’s message. Even more importantly, there was a sense of “myth” surrounding institutions like CDS that

²⁰⁹ Rosenak (2003) offered specific examples of different ritual practices that might be read or “valued” differently depending upon the orientation or belief system of the practitioner. For example, “commandments more plausibly resemble insights (to a non religious person); ‘election’ looks like historical situatedness; and *Kiddush haShem* (acceptance of martyrdom in glorification of God’s name) translates facilely into national pride” (p. 190). The fact the CDS did not elect this approach speaks much to the question of whether it should be considered a community day school or an Orthodox one. In order to embrace such an open realm of ascribed meaning, one must begin by acknowledging that there is no one single, correct frame of beliefs. Only then may action be freely interpreted. CDS’s insistence that rituals had specific, correct meanings embodied the core notion of Orthodoxy, which itself denotes a commitment to a single, proper frame of belief.

announced “here is a place where something distinctive happens.” The deepest challenge to institutional myth was that peripheral behaviors must all be brought into alignment in ways that further reinforce the core ideational notion of the community’s beliefs. Accordingly, institutions that choose to create “congregational” communities must be scrupulous to insure that each and every member’s action is in accord with the organization’s guiding values. By cultivating such durable notions of institutional *mythos*, organizations can successfully blend many diverse threads of practice into a tapestry of relative integrity. Within the Jewish day school, frequent and specific references to Jewish values, piety, spirituality, constructed notions of Jewish peoplehood and a principled defense of openly-valued concepts such as inclusion and teamwork²¹⁰ offer a durable basis for developing communities of belief.

Coda: Meeting Up in the Lunchroom

In celebration of the many lessons that I learned as an observer at CDS, this work closes with one final snapshot of cultural life at the school. The story, as conveyed verbatim through my field notes, speaks volumes with great simplicity.

Field Notes—June 8, 2006

It is the last week of school at CDS. Summer is in the air, and the tension of finals vies against a general sense of calm. Between classes, I stroll into the cafeteria at the close of the lunch period for a bite of food.

Two volunteers, the mothers of students, serve as cashiers. They sport tight but otherwise modest jeans as well as those trendy beach shoes that everyone is wearing and short sleeved shirts. It’s a bit more modest than the students wear, but still less than the CDS dress code calls for. The volunteers snack on leftover pizza from the day’s lunch and call over to Rabbi Herman, the kosher supervisor. Rabbi Herman is dressed in black

²¹⁰ While some of these “inclusion” values admittedly bleed into the category that Strike (2003) categorized as “family,” Stenson (2007) argued that a commitment to inclusion in and of itself could be grounded so deeply that it was elevated beyond the casualness of family association, becoming a core orienting belief for the entire community.

pants and a long-sleeved checked shirt despite the early summer heat. His untrimmed salt and pepper beard flows down to mid-chest, and long white *tzitzit* (ritual fringes) dangle down to his knees.

The contrast between the two moms and Rabbi Herman is obvious, but not nearly as notable as the comfort they feel in each other's presence. One asks Herman how his kids are, and they launch in to a conversation about parenting. When he mentions how many kids he has...all boys...they gasp. "Yep," he says, "we were going to hang a sign above the doorway saying 'Welcome to hormone hell!'" The moms chuckle, and before long, they are asking about his grandchildren (his youngest child is 13, but he already has four grandchildren) and compare notes on his wife's several pregnancies. Now they're talking about labor, due dates and pitocin. If I close my eyes for a minute, I can imagine them all wearing the same uniform of suburban moms chatting about kids. The striking feature of this tableau is the degree to which these people from different worlds broadcast an easy comfort with one another. Again, more evidence of the degree to which this school is a place in which unlikely characters fluidly cross cultural borders, if not erasing them altogether.

Do the boundaries vanish? Probably not, but in moments like these, the cultural, religious and economic divisions flicker out or fade to the background...as people connect around the experience of being parents, raising kids...commonalities that briefly but genuinely trump the deeper divisions that might otherwise take center stage...

By the start of June, 2006, I began to take notes less frequently during my travels through the school. Conscious of the fact that I had reached "saturation" (Shank, 2002) in my research, I prepared to exit the field. The work that I did at CDS was exhilarating as well as mentally exhausting. I often returned home from the field scratching my head about the meaning of what I observed that day. Rather than rush to conclusions, I allowed a lengthy stretch of time to code data fully, to assemble working models of cultural engagement and to revisit the assumptions of the sociological and ethnographic literature which guided my work.

Over time, a sense of grand narrative did emerge. The heart of this narrative was the ability of men and women to step beyond the beliefs and habits of association which

could have separated them in order to engage each other simply as human beings. In a town where the cultural costume of Black Hat orthodoxy was described by some parents as foreign or alienating, CDS offered a space where people from radically different communities could enter each other's world. While I do not presume to invest such small steps with significance that goes beyond their actual meaning, I also want to recognize the tremendous importance of what took place. CDS, for all of its tensions and flaws, offered one model of a community where cultural strangers deliberately "rubbed shoulders" and crossed boundaries. Now one decade in to the twenty-first century, this model of coexistence within a diverse community should challenge us to reassess both private and institutional patterns of ideation and association. As we learn more about the cultural "others" in our world, perhaps we will learn more about our own humanity.

Appendix A: Human Subjects Approval

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| <p>UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK Institutional Review Board Supporting Documentation and Review Board Approval</p> |
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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

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January 19, 2010

MEMORANDUM

Application Approval Notification

To: Dr. Steven Selden
Allan Selis
Education Policy and Leadership

From: Joseph M. Smith, MA, CIM

IRB Manager

University of Maryland, College Park

Re: **IRB Application Number:** 06-0168

Project Title: "Holding the Center: How One Jewish Day School Negotiates Religious Differences in a Pluralistic Community"

Approval Date: April 13, 2006

Expiration Date: April 13, 2007

Type of Application: Initial

Type of Research: Non-Exempt

Type of Review for Application: Expedited

The University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved your IRB application. The research was approved in accordance with the University IRB policies and procedures and 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects. Please include the above-cited IRB application number in any future

communications with our office regarding this research.

Recruitment/Consent: For research requiring written informed consent, the IRB-approved and stamped informed consent document is enclosed. The expiration date for IRB approval has been stamped on the informed consent document. Please keep copies of the consent forms used for this research for three years after the completion of the research.

Continuing Review: If you intend to continue to collect data from human subjects or to analyze private, identifiable data collected from human subjects, after the expiration date for this approval (indicated above), you must submit a renewal application to the IRB Office at least 45 days before the approval expiration date. If IRB approval of your project expires, all human subject research activities including the enrollment of new subjects, data collection, and analysis of identifiable private information must stop until the renewal application is approved by the IRB.

Modifications: Any changes to the approved protocol must be approved by the IRB before the change is implemented, except when a change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. If you would like to modify the approved protocol, please submit an addendum request to the IRB Office. The instructions for submitting a request are posted on the IRB web site at : <http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB/addendumapp.htm>.

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks: You must promptly report any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others to the IRB Manager at 301-405-0678 or jsmith@umresearch.umd.edu.

Student Researchers: Unless otherwise requested, this IRB approval document was sent to the Principal Investigator (PI). The PI should pass on the approval document or a copy to the student researchers. This IRB approval document may be a requirement for student researchers applying for graduation. The IRB may not be able to provide copies of the approval documents if several years have passed since the date of the original approval.

Additional Information: Please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 if you have any IRB-related questions or concerns or email at irb@umd.edu.

| UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK Institutional Review Board Initial Application for Research Involving Human Subjects Please complete this cover page AND provide all information requested in the attached instructions. | |
|--|---|
| Name of Principal Investigator (PI) or Project Faculty Advisor _____ <i>(NOT a student or fellow; must be UMD employee)</i> | Tel. No. 301-405-3566 |
| Name of Co-Investigator (Co-PI) _____ | Tel. No. _____ |
| Department or Unit Administering the Project EDPL | |
| E-Mail Address of PI ss22@umail.umd.edu | E-Mail Address of Co-PI _____ |
| Where should the IRB send the approval letter? Dr. Steven Selden 3112C Benjamin College Park, MD 20742 | |
| Name of Student Investigator Allen Selis | Tel. No. 301-424-3629 |
| Student Identification No. & E-Mail Address 216-56-8004 Selis@wam.umd.edu | |
| Check here if this is a <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISSERTATION research project <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Project Duration (mo/yr – mo/yr) 3/06 -- 3/07 | |
| Project Title Holding the Center: How One Jewish Day School Negotiates Religious Differences in a Pluralistic Community | |
| Sponsored Project Data | Funding Agency _____ ORAA Proposal ID Number _____ |
| <i>(PLEASE NOTE: Failure to include data above may result in delay of processing sponsored research award at ORAA.)</i> | |
| Conflict of Interest: Investigators <input type="checkbox"/> do <input type="checkbox"/> do not have a real or potential COI. Refer to question #7 on page 2. Members of Health Center: Investigators <input type="checkbox"/> are <input type="checkbox"/> are not members of the Health Center. Refer to question #8 on page 2. | |
| Vulnerable Population: The proposed research will involve the following (Check all that apply): pregnant women <input type="checkbox"/> , human fetuses <input type="checkbox"/> , neonates <input type="checkbox"/> , minors/children <input type="checkbox"/> , prisoners <input type="checkbox"/> , students <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> , individuals with mental disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> , individuals with physical disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Exempt or Nonexempt (Optional): You may recommend your research for exemption or nonexemption by completing the appropriate box below. For exempt recommendation, list the numbers for the exempt category(s) that apply. Refer to page 4 of this document. <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt —List Exemption Category Numbers _____ <i>Or</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Exempt | |
| If exempt, briefly describe the reason(s) for exemption. Your notation is a suggestion to the IRB Manager and IRB Co-Chairs. | |
| Date _____ | Signature of Principal Investigator or Faculty Advisor <i>(PLEASE NOTE: Person signing above accepts responsibility for project, even when data collection is performed by other investigators)</i> _____ |
| Date _____ | Signature of Co-Principal Investigator _____ |
| Date _____ | Signature of Student Investigator _____ |
| Date _____ | REQUIRED Signature of the Departmental Human Subjects Review Committee Chairperson or Designee OR For Departments and Units without an HSRC: Department Head (Chairperson) or Designee or Unit Head (Director) or Designee Name _____ , Title _____ <i>(PLEASE NOTE: When HSRC Chairperson or Unit Head is also a project investigator or the Student Investigator's advisor, this line should be signed by Designee)</i> |
| *PLEASE ATTACH THIS COVER PAGE TO EACH SET OF COPIES | |

IRB APPLICATION NARRATIVE

1. Abstract:

Holding the Center: How One Day School Negotiates Religious Differences in a Pluralistic Community

This project centers on the experiences of a successful Kindergarten through Twelfth grade Jewish day school that defines itself as a “community” institution. The school includes teachers, students, parents and administrators who come from very different philosophical backgrounds, and often do not hold similar beliefs about the religious and cultural values which guide the educational mission of the school. The core goal of this ethnographic inquiry will be to ask the question: How does a culturally heterogeneous group of religious studies faculty and students negotiate the challenge of communal participation in the high school division of one Jewish day school? During the period of study, I will participate in the life of the school as an ethnographic field-worker. Part of my field work will include observation of high school classrooms. Interviews with teachers, parents of students and key administrators will complement data from classroom observation.

2. Subject selection:

- A. Subjects of this study will include teachers, parents and lead administrators in a Jewish community day school. I will recruit subjects by inviting them directly, verbally and in writing, to participate in this study. The study will not be advertised.
- B. Subjects in this study will be selected on one of two basis. For administrators, subjects will be invited to participate based upon their knowledge of the school culture. For teachers and parents, subjects will be invited to participate out of a purposeful sampling strategy that seeks to explore the points of contact between religiously and culturally diverse populations within the school.
- C. The core research question that I pose relates to how one school manages diversity of religious views and cultural affiliations. For that reason, I will deliberately include subjects who represent a broad range of philosophical beliefs and cultural stances within Jewish tradition.
- D. Between 20 and 30 subjects, total, will be recruited for this study.

3. Procedures:

Classroom Observation

After securing the consent of lead informants, I propose to observe their classrooms for approximately two months in order to take observational notes of interactions with students. Such field notes will capture the physical layout of the classroom, record classroom dialogue, identify coded or culturally distinctive patterns of language and note a range of artifacts, kinesthetics, and non-verbal communications. I propose to capture field data noted above using a pen and paper journal, by scanning the classroom at two minute intervals to check for any relevant patterns of behavior.

Faculty Interviews

Data drawn from in-class observation about the relationships among students and faculty will generate a series of focused questions during the course of field work. I propose to interview lead informants several times over the course of classroom observations in order to gain basic information and to follow up on issues that emerge from classroom interactions. The first interview will coincide with the start of field observation. All interviews will be conducted in a private setting, and I will explain risks, benefits, issues of confidentiality and will secure informed consent in writing prior to the start of interviews. I will ask all informants for their written consent to digitally record each interview. I will also ask for consent to make records of conversations that occur outside of the interview setting (see below). Each interview will be transcribed, and identifying information will be coded to protect confidentiality. Original digital audio recordings will be archived on electronic media stored in a secure location, away from the research site. At the close of the transcription process, all identifying original media will be erased or destroyed.

Sample questions for lead informants—initial interview.

1. Tell me about yourself and what brought you to teach in this school.
2. Where did you learn in Yeshiva? / What is your educational background?
3. What religious community are you part of in (City name)?
4. Does this school's religious philosophy match your own? If it is the same, in what ways? If it is different, how do you reconcile those differences?
5. Tell me about your class this year.
6. Do you enjoy teaching it?
7. What is challenging to you?
8. What do you want your students to accomplish in the course of the year?
9. Do you send / have you sent your child/ren to CDS? Why/why not?
10. Would you want your child/ren to enroll in the class that I am observing?

During the course of field observation, I will schedule periodic short probes that reflect back upon observed classroom interactions.

Sample questions for lead informants—periodic probes.

1. In (yesterday's) class, I notice you said xxx. What did you mean by that?
2. Do you think the students understood the lesson?
3. What might have made it hard/easy for them?
4. I saw that student xxx frequently (participates/doesn't participate/has a smile, raises issues like...). What do you make of that?

At the close of field observation, I propose to follow up with a second interview of lead informants.

Sample questions for lead informants—final interview.

1. How do you think your class is going so far?
2. Do you feel like you get to use your educational / yeshiva training at CDS?
3. Does the religious outlook of kids in the class match yours? (follow up w/ probes)
4. Would you rather teach Orthodox kids only?
5. What do you think your students get out of learning with you?

6. Has the experience of teaching non-Orthodox kids challenged you?
7. What are the most important differences that you notice between yourself and your students?
8. Are there some differences that don't seem important—or seem less important than they used to?
9. In addition to these questions, the research design allows for probes of subjects' answers and the exploration of emergent issues during the course of field work.

Parent Interviews

At the close of the academic year (approximately two to three months after the start of field work), I will recruit parents of students from the classrooms that I observed to interview in order to gain data about the home cultures and religious philosophies that students bring with them as participants in the life of CDS.

Sample questions for parents.

1. Why do you send your child to this school?
2. How would you describe your Jewish identity or your household's religious philosophy?
3. How does the school's philosophy match your own sense of identity?
4. Have you seen any change in your child's Jewish identity during this year or past years?
5. Do you discuss the fact that your child has peers who maintain very different beliefs than yours?
6. How do you feel about Rabbi / Mrs. X who teaches your son/daughter?
7. What do you think you have in common with Rabbi / Mrs. X? How do you differ?
8. Do you see yourself as part of the same community?
9. Has your involvement with CDS ever challenged you personally?
10. What has been the most valuable thing you have gained by your association with CDS?
11. Is there anything about CDS you would like to see changed?

In addition to these questions, the research design allows for probes of subjects' answers and the exploration of emergent issues during the course of field work.

Supplemental interviews.

In addition to my core field observation and interviews (noted above), I will collect a broad range of supplemental field data. I will interview lead administrators across the course of my field work.

Sample questions for administrators.

1. Tell me about the history of CDS.
2. What makes the school unique?
3. Do you see any other schools in America that are similar or that you view as peers? Why?

4. I noticed that CDS stresses the word “community” in its name. How did that come to be? What distinguishes this school as a “community” institution?
5. Have there been any community issues or incidents which have tested the limits of community?
6. Does this school represent Modern Orthodoxy?
7. How do you reconcile the Orthodox orientation of the synagogue that sponsors this school with the liberal and secular backgrounds of many students?
8. How do you pick your instructional staff?
9. What do you tell new staff about working in this school?
10. I would like to ask you about several items that have appeared in the "Chambers" notes that are publicly distributed each week. Could you tell me about: (quote from Chambers notes)?

In addition to these questions, the research design allows for probes of subjects’ answers and the exploration of emergent issues during the course of field work.

Supplemental interviews with teachers

I will also interview teaching staff beyond the pool of my lead informants to probe their view of emergent issues using the same format as the “periodic probe” questions, noted above.

Additional Observational Data

Given the degree to which faculty often discuss the school and its culture in staff meetings and during informal conversation, I propose to seek written consent from faculty to quote remarks made in these settings. I will take field notes based upon observing weekly school assemblies, daily prayer services and other mandatory activities that are incorporated into the regular schedule of the school week. The rationale for observing these sites varies. School assemblies are a particularly important space to observe school culture in action. Students partially facilitate these weekly gatherings of students and faculty, and frequently use this space to express their own views about life in school. By contrast, prayer services offer an opportunity to observe how students respond to the school’s policy that all students must attend morning worship.

Documentary evidence and artifacts.

The school has offered to make available extensive written records such as curriculum documents, accreditation reports, promotional videos and printed public relations material. CDS has a unique tradition of student-produced videos, which often satirize elements of life at school. This artifact offers a valuable window into student views about the culture of their school. I plan to make copies of flyers posted in the hallways, and will digitally photograph other artwork or flyers too large to copy. Finally, the school has offered me access to publicly distributed communications, notes, flyers and memos from the course of an entire year. I plan to read each individual document and to transcribe each video. I will incorporate supplemental data from these sources based

upon the relevance of each source with respect to emerging themes of my on-site and interview-based field work.

4. Risks and Benefits:

There are no known risks to subjects.

Benefits to subjects vary. Teachers will benefit from an opportunity to receive sustained feedback about their classroom practice from an outside observer. Administrators will receive a large degree of qualitative information about the culture of CDS, and have indicated that this information will assist their efforts to improve the quality of the school program.

5. Confidentiality:

Recorded interviews will be transcribed and all subjects will be assigned a code number. All original copies of interviews, along with master lists of identifying information will be stored off-site from the school, in a secured location. During on-site field work, all records will remain in the researcher's physical possession. All printed materials will identify subjects by code number or by a pseudonym. At the close of this research, all media containing audio recordings will be destroyed or erased.

6. Information and Consent Forms:

Subjects will be told what this research is intended to investigate (the development of culture in schools) and how their information will be used. No recruitment or consent information is deceptive.

All subjects will be adults. Prior to gathering information for which consent is required, the researcher will explain all procedures, and ask if they are clearly understood. Adult subjects will sign consent forms prior to the start of any interview, and will retain a copy of that form for their records.

7. Conflict of Interest:

This study does not present a conflict of interest as described by UMD policy.

8. HIPAA Compliance:

HIPPA compliance procedures are not required for this study.

9. Research Outside of the United States:

All research will take place inside the United State.

10. Research Involving Prisoners:

No research in this study will involve prisoners.

CONSENT FORM—STAFF

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| Project Title | Holding the Center: How One Day School Negotiates Religious Differences in a Pluralistic Community |
| Why is this research being done? | <i>This is a research project being conducted by Allen Selis, under the supervision of Dr. Steven Selden, at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a teacher at Jewish community day school. The purpose of this research project is to help understand how students and teachers create a shared sense of community while working with individuals from very different backgrounds from their own.</i> |
| What will I be asked to do? | <i>The procedures of this study involve answering a short set of questions. For example: "Tell me about yourself and what brought you to teach in this school." "What do you want your students to accomplish in the course of the year?" "Has the experience of teaching non-Orthodox students challenged you?" Your replies will be recorded on audio tape and transcribed after the interview for research purposes.</i> |
| What about confidentiality? | <i>We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all tapes of this interview will be transcribed and a confidential code will be assigned to you. Only the researcher will have access to research codes. All tapes will be stored in a secure, locked environment away from the research site. Once this research is concluded, all identifying records including the audio tape of your interview will be erased or destroyed. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others.</i> |
| What are the risks of this research? | <i>There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.</i> |
| What are the benefits of this research? | <i>This research may help the investigator learn more about Torah education in the Jewish day school. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how children come to see themselves as members of the larger Jewish community. This research will benefit you by offering a professional vehicle to reflect on your teaching practice in ways that often lead to improvement of classroom teaching.</i> |
| Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time? | <i>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</i> |

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| Project Title | Holding the Center: How One Day School Negotiates Religious Differences in a Pluralistic Community | | |
| What if I have questions? | <p><i>This research is being conducted by Allen Selis, under the supervision of Dr. Steven Selden at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Dr. Selden at 3112C Benjamin College Park, MD 20742; (301)405-3566 or ss22@umail.umd.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678</i></p> <p><i>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</i></p> | | |
| Statement of Age of Subject and Consent | <p><i>Your signature indicates that:</i></p> <p><i>you are at least 18 years of age;</i></p> <p><i>the research has been explained to you;</i></p> <p><i>your questions have been fully answered; and</i></p> <p><i>you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.</i></p> | | |
| Digital Audio Recording | <p><i>This research project involves making a digital audio recording of your interview. This tape will allow the researcher to thoughtfully and accurately understand your answers to questions. Only the researcher will have access to these digital recordings, which will be stored away from the school. At the close of research, all recordings will be erased or destroyed.</i></p> <p>_____ <i>I agree to be digitally recorded during my participation in this study</i></p> <p>_____ <i>I do not agree to be digitally recorded during my participation in this study</i></p> | | |
| Consent to Record and Quote Interactions Outside of Interviews | <p><i>This research project involves observing and taking notes of statements that you make during staff meetings, in the faculty offices and during informal conversation. These conversations offer important insight regarding nuanced aspects of school culture, and may be quoted verbatim if you give your consent. In such a case, you will not be identified and your confidentiality is guaranteed.</i></p> <p>_____ <i>I give consent for you to transcribe and quote from statements that I might make in the settings described, above.</i></p> <p>_____ <i>I do not consent for you to transcribe and quote from statements that I might make in the settings described, above.</i></p> | | |
| Signature and Date | NAME OF SUBJECT | | |
| | SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT | | |
| | DATE | | |

CONSENT FORM—ADMINISTRATORS

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| Project Title | Holding the Center: How One Day School Negotiates Religious Differences in a Pluralistic Community |
| Why is this research being done? | <i>This is a research project being conducted by Allen Selis, under the supervision of Dr. Steven Selden, at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a teacher at Jewish community day school. The purpose of this research project is to help understand how students and teachers create a shared sense of community while working with individuals from very different backgrounds from their own.</i> |
| What will I be asked to do? | <i>The procedures of this study involve answering a short set of questions. For example: "Tell me about the history of the school." "What makes the school unique?" "Does this school represent modern Orthodoxy?" "How do you reconcile the Orthodox orientation of the synagogue with the liberal and secular backgrounds of many students?" Your replies will be recorded on audio tape and transcribed after the interview for research purposes.</i> |
| What about confidentiality? | <i>We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all tapes of this interview will be transcribed and a confidential code will be assigned to you. Only the researcher will have access to research codes. All tapes will be stored in a secure, locked environment away from the research site. Once this research is concluded, all identifying records including the audio tape of your interview will be erased or destroyed. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others.</i> |
| What are the risks of this research? | <i>There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.</i> |
| What are the benefits of this research? | <i>This research may help the investigator learn more about Torah education in the Jewish day school. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how children come to see themselves as members of the larger Jewish community. This research will benefit you by offering an in depth study of community culture in your school. Used thoughtfully, this research can help your school become more effective at achieving its mission of creating community among a diverse group of students.</i> |
| Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time? | <i>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</i> |

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| Consent to Record and Quote Interactions Outside of Interviews | <p><i>This research project involves observing and taking notes of statements that you make during staff meetings, in the faculty offices and during informal conversation. These conversations offer important insight regarding nuanced aspects of school culture, and may be quoted verbatim if you give your consent. In such a case, you will not be identified and your confidentiality is guaranteed.</i></p> <p>_____ <i>I give consent for you to transcribe and quote from statements that I might make in the settings described, above.</i></p> <p>_____ <i>I do not consent for you to transcribe and quote from statements that I might make in the settings described, above.</i></p> | | |
| Signature and Date | NAME OF SUBJECT | | |
| | SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT | | |
| | DATE | | |

CONSENT FORM—PARENTS

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| Project Title | Holding the Center: How One Day School Negotiates Religious Differences in a Pluralistic Community |
| Why is this research being done? | <i>This is a research project being conducted by Allen Selis, under the supervision of Dr. Steven Selden, at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are the parent of a student attending a Jewish community day school. The purpose of this research project is to help understand how students and teachers create a shared sense of community while working with individuals from very different backgrounds from their own.</i> |
| What will I be asked to do? | <i>The procedures of this study involve answering a short set of questions. For example: "Why do you send your child to this school?" "How does the school's philosophy match your own religious philosophy?" "Has your involvement with CDS ever challenged you personally?" Your replies will be recorded on audio tape and transcribed after the interview for research purposes.</i> |
| What about confidentiality? | <i>We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all tapes of this interview will be transcribed and a confidential code will be assigned to you. Only the researcher will have access to research codes. All tapes will stored in a secure, locked environment away from the research site. Once this research is concluded, all identifying records including the audio tape of your interview will be erased or destroyed. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others.</i> |
| What are the risks of this research? | <i>There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.</i> |
| What are the benefits of this research? | <i>This research may help the investigator learn more about Torah education in the Jewish day school. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how children come to see themselves as members of the larger Jewish community. To the extent that school staff have expressed an interest in the results of this study, it offers a vehicle for improving the school's ability to create an inclusive community of learners.</i> |
| Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time? | <i>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</i> |

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| Signature and Date | NAME OF SUBJECT | |
| | SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT | |
| | DATE | |

Sample Letter to Prospective Participants

Dear _____,

I am conducting research as a doctoral student in the department of Education and Policy Leadership at the University of Maryland. In this capacity, I am studying the nature of community among students and faculty at the XXX Community School. MrsXXX has graciously offered me the opportunity to conduct this research at XXX during the past year. At this point, I would like to invite your assistance with my research, as well.

During the course of the next several months, I will be interviewing selected faculty, sitting in and observing classroom teaching, participating in school activities and attending faculty meetings in order to learn more about how XXX creates a sense of community. This information will play a critical role in the doctoral dissertation that I am currently writing, titled "Holding the Center: How One Day School Negotiates Religious Differences in a Pluralistic Community." As the title implies, I am interested in studying how a community as diverse as XXX works to include all of its members in a shared enterprise. Your participation will be very helpful in this process.

You are invited to participate in this research by answering a set of questions as part of a formal, structured interview. The oral interview will last approximately 40 minutes, and will be conducted on the campus of XXX. Your confidentiality will be safeguarded as part of this process, and all information you provide will be confidential. If you agree to participate, you will make a positive contribution to the field of Torah education by allowing a broader community of educators to gain deeper insight into how Jewish day schools create community among diverse groups of students.

I will follow up with you in the next week, and will be pleased to supply additional information or answer any questions you might have.

Thank you very much for considering participating in this research.

Sincerely,

R. Allen Selis

Appendix B: Access Proposal to CDS Administration

Research Proposal: Listing of Access Issues
Allen Selis, Ph.D. Candidate, UMD-College Park

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

Research question:

The core goal of this ethnographic inquiry will be to ask the question: How does the school succeed in creating a coherent sense of educational and religious community, given the broad plurality of values that all participants bring to this educational system?

To explore this question, I plan to observe various aspects of the life of the school.

Meetings I would like to observe staff meetings, school board/committee, and senior staff/administration meetings as appropriate.

Classrooms I would observe the classroom interactions of students and teachers.

Individuals I would schedule formal interviews with a number of parties at an appropriate point in the school year. These include: Mrs. XXX, selected administrators, teachers, students, the family of students, and Rabbi XXX.

Safeguards All aspects of the data gathering process are protected, in accordance with regulations of the University of Maryland's Research Ethics Committee.

Accordingly:

- I may only interview or observe parties that have offered consent.
- I guarantee the confidentiality of all parties that I observe.
- At the end of the project, all tapes or transcripts with identifying information will be erased, destroyed or otherwise coded to eliminate identifying data.
- Mrs. XXX and anyone she designates will be able read drafts of my dissertation in all stages prior to publication. All inputs from these readers will become part of the final version of the dissertation.

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